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THE HAWKSHAWES

A Novel

BY

M. A. BIRD

AUTHOR OF "SPELL-BOUND," "THE FATE OF THORSGETHILL"
ETC. ETC. ETC

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I



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THE HAWKSHAWES

CHAPTER I.

FUNERAL AND DEATH.

THERE was not a dry eye among the whole congregation when the funeral sermon was ended.

Every one knew the sterling worth and goodness of their late pastor; and, as his old friend, who preached the funeral sermon, and who had travelled many hundred miles to perform this last sad office, gave his simple testimony to his virtuous life, beginning from their school days, and embracing a period of nearly fifty years, all knew that the speaker stated but the simple truth, and was not led into extravagant eulogy by the warmth of his friendship.

The sorrowful assembly quitted the church. The preacher, after a short rest and much-needed refreshment at the parsonage, was compelled to hasten back to his own parish; and the widow and her only child were left alone.

It was a lovely, balmy afternoon in September; the gentle west wind, instead of blowing the leaves from the trees, seemed to woo them to remain; the robin sang cheerfully, and the blackbird piped as merrily as though he had the cheerful spring before him, instead of dreary winter.

Mrs. Maynard's naturally fragile constitution was so completely broken down by unceasing attendance on her husband during his last illness, that, though by nearly twenty years his junior, it seemed improbable she would long survive him. The painful excitement of the funeral, and the necessity of exerting herself to pay due respect to the old and tried friend who had

been her guest on the occasion, had supplied her with a fictitious strength to undergo the fatigue of the day; but when the rumble of the fly that conveyed the Reverend Mr. Cottingham to the railway station was lost in the distance, she sank quietly back in her chair and fainted. Ellen's loud cry brought the bewildered servants to her assistance, and by their united exertions the poor lady was restored to consciousness.

"I must not give way like this," said Mrs. Maynard, striving to appear stronger than she really felt, "you will not be able to complete your preparations, dearest, if you are called away so often to attend to me. I ought to try to assist you, instead of being a hindrance."

"Do not fret about it, dear mamma," replied her daughter, "you will but make yourself worse by doing so. If we cannot get ready by the time named, it will not

be difficult to defer the sale for a few days."

"The sale *must* take place on the day appointed," said Mrs. Maynard, in a weak, but decided voice, "for on the day after, the painters and workmen have orders to commence the repairs."

"So soon!" sighed Ellen; "then it shall be so. Sit you quietly here, dearest mamma, and I will manage everything."

Two days before that which was fixed for the sale, Ellen had accomplished her laborious duties. Every repository for those odds and ends which careful housewives delight in accumulating, had been turned out, and its contents examined. Whatever might be useful in the quiet lodgings to which she and her mother had resolved to retire, was retained, and the remainder distributed among the poor.

Mr. Maynard had held the living for more than thirty years, and as his wife was

one of those careful women who, under the idea that it "may be useful some day," never throw anything away; and as her feeble health had prevented the wholesome clearance effected by an occasional active rummaging, the accumulation of useless rubbish during this long period was something enormous. There were bundles upon bundles of old letters, possessing the peculiar charm of being of no use or interest *even* to the owner; account books that ought to have lighted fires twenty years before; piles of Ellen's own copy books, just as they had been sent from school; and bales and boxes of garments of so ancient a cut that one might have been puzzled to decide whether they might or might not have been acceptable at the British Museum.

All was at length completed. The auctioneer's clerks had marked and catalogued the furniture, excepting a few favourite

articles, such as her father's easy-chair, which had been removed to their lodgings, and Ellen had now only to support her mother's feeble steps from the home which had been hers for so many tranquil and happy years.

Mrs. Maynard was sitting at the open window of her favourite parlour, looking into the garden. The window was deeply set in a thick mass of roses, clematis, and sweet briar, and the well-known perfumes stole into the room, filling it with odours as sweet as when their first blossoms opened with not more joyous aspirations than those of the faded and withered woman who now inhaled their fragrance for the last time.

"I must walk round the garden once more before I go, Ellen," said Mrs. Maynard, rising from her chair with more activity than she had shown since the day of her husband's funeral.

"Nay, dear mamma, do not attempt it now," remonstrated her daughter; "wait till you are stronger."

"No, darling," said her mother, firmly, "when once I go away, I shall never set foot in my old home again. I could not bear to see alterations made by strangers in the spots that your father loved. I could not bear to see the shrubs that he planted cut down to make way for modern improvements. I shall always think of the dear old garden as it was when he cultivated it,—full of sweet, homely English flowers, and the trees and shrubs, whose growth we watched together for so many years. I will walk round it, if possible, this evening; and that will be for the last time. I shall never come into it when it belongs to strangers."

With great difficulty the sorrowing widow went through her self-imposed task. Ellen

had thoughtfully brought with her a camp stool, that her mother might rest herself occasionally.

“Do not gather any flowers now, dear mamma,” said Ellen, as her mother stooped painfully, to pluck a rose of remarkable beauty; “I will run out again while you rest after this fatiguing walk, and gather all your favourites. I’ll not miss any, I assure you.”

“I can trust you, dear,” replied her mother; “but here is one that I must gather with my own hand; the latest bud on your poor father’s favourite rose-tree. When it withers, preserve it in memory of this day, my dearest Ellen; it is the last flower I shall ever give you out of the old garden.”

Ellen did not trust herself to reply, but strove hard to keep back her tears, while her mother fixed the half-blown rose on her bosom.

"I must go in now," said the poor lady, "for I feel quite exhausted."

With the tenderest care Ellen supported the feeble steps of her beloved parent back to the parlour; the only room in the house in which the furniture remained undisturbed. She placed her comfortably on the large old-fashioned sofa, and having received an assurance that she felt better, and was only suffering from fatigue, ran out into the garden to cull the bouquet. In about twenty minutes she returned, laden with her fragrant burthen, and just as she re-entered the house a servant met her to say that the fly which was to convey them away was waiting at the door. With a sad heart, struck down by this last trivial incident, though it had occurred in consequence of her own orders given in the morning, Ellen went into the parlour.

Another had entered before her.

The fly had come with its rattling wheels,

and Betsy had hastened to announce its arrival. But an angel with noiseless wings had come into the house. It had gone forth again unnoticed. The rustle of its pinions—dark when viewed from this lower earth, bright and glorious when seen from above, with the light of heaven streaming upon them—had not been heard by the ears that were so ready to perceive the rattle of carriage wheels on the pavement.

It had gone forth again, with another, a suffering spirit, in its arms; and no one saw it.

“Hush!” said Ellen, as she looked into the parlour; “hush, Betsy! Mamma is asleep. Tell the man to wait. I would not disturb her on any account.”

Poor loving child! Thou couldst not, if thou wouldst!

Ellen arranged her flowers, and waited patiently. Minute after minute glided by.

Her mother was not accustomed to sleep so long in the daytime; but doubtless she was much wearied.

“It is very strange,” murmured Ellen; “I hope she has not fainted.”

She held her face close to the parted lips, but she felt no breath; she gently touched the pale cheek—it was cold as marble; she tried to raise the hand, but it was rigid. Only once before had she looked on Death, and now she hesitated to recognise his grim and unfamiliar presence. She flew to the front door.

“Fetch a doctor!” she cried to the driver of the fly, who was improving the occasion by polishing the brass on his harness—“Mr. Smedley, if he is at home; and if not, then the first you can find. Make haste! Drive as fast as you can, and bring him back with you. My mother is very ill!”

She hastened back to the parlour, and saw Betsy standing by the sofa.

"Is she recovering?" was her first eager question. "Run to the door, Betsy, and hurry the man off! How slow he is!"

Betsy obeyed in silence.

"Make haste for the doctor, Jim," said she to the driver (an old acquaintance); "it's of no earthly use his coming, but it will satisfy miss. Poor dear missis is gone, but it will be best for the doctor to tell Miss Ellen so himself; so don't lose no time."

"Betsy—look here!" said the young lady, turning round a face of ghastly paleness as the faithful servant returned to her; "do you think it possible that—but I cannot believe it! I am sure she has only fainted."

"The doctor will be here soon, miss," replied the girl, "and he will know better than I can what is amiss. She's very pale, and she's very cold; but while there's life there's hope, you know, miss."

"But what if there should *not* be life?

What then, Betsy?" said poor Ellen, in a sepulchral whisper.

Betsy either did not or would not hear the question, but busied herself with the well-meaning mockery of administering restoratives, until the arrival of Mr. Smedley, the surgeon who had attended Mr. Maynard during his last illness.

"What is amiss with mamma?" cried Ellen, as the surgeon bent over the sofa; "is it a fainting fit?"

"No," he replied, shaking his head; "no, it is not a fainting fit. Prepare yourself for the worst, my dear young lady; I can give you no hopes of her recovery. You have long been aware that she had disease of the heart, which might prove fatal under any strong excitement. I did not expect her to survive your father, even for an hour. That she did so was little short of a miracle; and now this last grief of leaving her home has been too much for her. It would be

worse than useless for me to offer any consolation at present, but you may rely upon my putting off the sale, and doing everything that is requisite to spare you every avoidable pain and trouble."

He paused on perceiving that his words fell upon unheeding ears.

"Tell her," he continued, to Betsy—"tell her, when she is sufficiently composed to understand you, that she may rest perfectly satisfied that everything shall be attended to. I am now going to the auctioneer to stop the sale. I will return in an hour, and ascertain her wishes respecting the funeral."

It seemed that the presence even of the kind-hearted and sympathizing doctor was a bar to the full indulgence of the orphan's grief; for no sooner was the door closed behind him, than Ellen uttered a wild scream, and threw herself sobbing upon the body of her mother.

The violence of her sorrow at length exhausted itself, and her own strength with it; and when Mr. Smedley again presented himself, she wore an outward appearance of calmness which he had little expected to see. When he talked to her, however, of the arrangements which he had already made, and consulted her as to those which he contemplated, he found her quite incapable of comprehending what he said, or of forming any opinion upon the subject.

"Have you any relations to whom I can write?" he asked. "You ought to have some friend at hand to act for you."

This question was heard and understood.

"Friend! Relation!" she repeated, looking round with a frightened air, "I have not one, now *she* is gone! Oh! it is dreadful to be all alone in the world!"

Mr. Smedley was glad to see that another idea, even though a painful one, had dawned

upon her mind. She wept afresh at the sense of loneliness, and his kind condolence soon aroused a feeling of gratitude, that all unconsciously to herself soothed the intensity of her grief.

CHAPTER II.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF ADVERSITY.

IN little more than a week after her father's funeral, Ellen Maynard saw the remains of her beloved mother deposited in the same grave; and on the evening of that day she went alone to the lodgings which had been prepared for the reception of her mother and herself.

The sale took place in due course, and then, on examining the state of her exchequer, Ellen found that instead of the comfortable independence which all the town had expected would have been hers, either at her father's death, or when she married, something under a thousand pounds

constituted her whole fortune, for Mrs. Maynard's private income expired with her.

Ellen was too unsophisticated, too free from all worldly-mindedness to think it prudent to conceal from her acquaintances the fact of her altered fortune. She suffered it to be fished out of her by one of the first visitors who called upon her in her new abode, and in a few hours it was known all over the town. She was made unpleasantly aware of the error she had committed, by the patronizing airs which some subsequent visitors assumed towards her, and by the humiliating freedom of the advice which almost all thought themselves entitled to obtrude upon her ; one indeed going so far as to hint at the usefulness of left-off wearing apparel. Now Ellen, though a gentle and affectionate girl, was a very proud one, and these things galled and chafed her more than she liked to own, for such a spirit was

not, she knew, in accordance with the precepts of Christian humility which her parents had always endeavoured to inculcate in her mind.

“And now, my dear Miss Maynard,” concluded the last-named visitor, after a great deal of unasked-for advice upon the subjects of propriety and economy, “if there is anything that I can do for you, only let me know it, and if it lies in my power to befriend you, you may reckon upon me; and I may as well just mention that we are going out of mourning next week, and if there is anything that would be useful, you know, and the things are many of them as good as new, and my girls are nearly of your own height——”

“I feel much obliged to you, ma’am,” interrupted Ellen, swallowing a lump in her throat that seemed threatening to suffocate her, while her eyes flashed, and her lip curled, though she felt ready to burst into

tears, "but I have already provided the servants with more mourning than they will require, as they are not going to continue in my service."

"Oh, indeed!" said Mrs. Minshull, very curtly, for she felt rebuffed, and though she could hardly suppose that the poor orphan had wilfully ignored the drift of her beneficent offer, there was something in Ellen's manner that prevented her explaining herself more clearly; "then, if there is nothing I can do for you at present, my dear Miss Maynard, I will wish you good morning. Remember you may always look upon me as a friend. You are very young to be thrown, as I may say, almost penniless upon the world; and whenever you need it, my best advice is at your service. By-the-bye, my dear, I may as well ask you now what are your plans for the future?"

"Really, madam," replied Ellen, almost out of patience, "I have not had time to

consider for the future. My thoughts have been so painfully engrossed by the past, that nothing short of absolute necessity could have compelled me to pay attention even to the present. Of the future I have scarcely thought."

"Well, my dear girl," said the visitor, rising, "all I can say is, do nothing without consulting your friends. Good morning, my dear—good morning."

She departed, and Ellen sank back in the comfortable easy-chair—now, alas! her own—and large tears rolled down her cheeks.

"*Friends! consult my friends!*" she murmured—"where are they? Misfortune has shown me that I have none—except, indeed, Mr. Smedley; he is a friend. And, besides—I wish I could hear whether Lady Willoughby has been seen in the town for the last day or two. I did not like to ask any of those gossiping, patronizing women. Oh! I must not say I am friendless!

While dear Frank lives I have one friend worth all those I have forfeited by the crime of poverty. And his mother is my friend, too, I am sure she is," she added, with a dubious sigh.

Ellen fell into a reverie, from which she was roused by the entrance of Mr. Smedley. The face of the good doctor expressed concern, and some vexation. He tossed his hat upon the table, and flung his gloves into it, as though he wished somebody's head were in the hat, and the fists of a pugilist in the gloves. Having done this, he took a chair in silence.

"What is amiss, my dear sir?" said Ellen. "You are certainly vexed about something."

"Yes, my poor child; I am vexed with you, but downright angry with myself."

He had never before addressed her so familiarly; and the first suggestion of her sensitive pride was — "And is *he*, too,

changed with changing fortune?" But also he had never before spoken to her so kindly; and pride, as it deserved in this instance to be, was put to the rout.

"What have I done wrong?" she asked, mildly.

"You have let some confounded gossip get hold of the fact that you are not so rich as you were supposed to be; and it is buzzed all over the town by this time."

"I know it," said Ellen, quietly; "and at first I regretted it, because I was exposed to much petty annoyance in consequence; but now I am glad it is known. It has shown me the true worth of many professing friends. I am saved the disgrace which I should incur in my own eyes were I, even tacitly, to countenance a falsity; and besides," she added, with a smile of lurking sarcasm, "it has procured for me the benefit of more good advice than I shall be able to follow if I live to the age of a hundred."

"I'll be sworn it has!" cried Mr. Smedley, laughing; "and that, my dear young lady, tallies curiously with the petty annoyances that you mentioned in the first instance. Is there any connexion between the two, eh?"

"I cannot deny it," she replied; "but does it not seem strange that the fact of my being poor instead of rich, should give every person an imaginary right to direct and control my actions? And the diversity of their counsel, too, was most amusing; or would have been so, if anything could amuse me now. One advised me to invest my money in a benevolent society, and live upon the proceeds in a highly respectable ladies' school to which she would recommend me. Another almost ordered me to place my little property in her husband's hands, promising a handsome interest upon it, whereupon I was to board in a farmhouse in South Wales. A third told me the only thing was to emigrate to New Zealand,

and promised me letters of introduction to the principal clergy, including the bishop. A fourth recommended Australia, but warned me against America. A fifth asserted as stoutly that America was the only place ; and a sixth was for starting off forthwith to order my outfit, and secure my passage to India. There were but two points on which they all agreed."

"And those two were?—" suggested the doctor.

"One, that the utmost circumspection and propriety of conduct was indispensable," said Ellen; "and the other that I must do nothing without consulting my friends, at the head of whom I was, of course, to rank the lady who happened at that moment to be favouring me with her advice."

"And I," said Mr. Smedley, "whose profession it is to give advice, am now enraged with myself, because I neglected, or I should say more correctly, abstained from obtruding

it upon you, on this very subject. I was about to warn you not to let your altered circumstances be known, but I checked myself, thinking I had no business to interfere; but when I heard the way in which these fine ladies talked about it, I was mad to reflect that I might have stopped it all by a few words in season."

"It is better as it is, sir," said Ellen; "the few who are true will seem all the brighter by the contrast, and fortunately my feelings are not at all involved so far. There is not one among them all for whom I felt any affection."

She paused a moment, and then asked, with some hesitation, if he knew whether Lady Willoughby had been lately into the town.

"Yes—yes—I believe so," replied Mr. Smedley, turning red, and hesitating, "that is—I think not. I was attending her a week ago for a slight attack of influenza."

"Is she confined to the house?" asked Ellen.

"No—no—not now," stammered Mr. Smedley.

There was something very suspicious in all this hesitation on the part of a man usually so frank and free-spoken as the doctor; but aided by her experience of other "dear friends," the orphan saw plainly enough what he kindly desired to conceal. Lady Willoughby was able to visit her, but held aloof. This was worse than if she had come, like the rest, with her budget of advice, for Ellen could have taken advice from *her*, as from a mother. This was indeed the unkindest cut of all. Ellen, it is true, had formed no plans for the future; but she had indulged a hope and a dream. The hope was that Frank Willoughby—a captain in the army, and now at Malta with his regiment—would keep true to the faith he had plighted to her in more prosperous

days; the dream was, that his mother, who had not found anything to object to in a marriage with the daughter of a clergyman, who, however moderate and simple his own style of living, was known to have saved up something handsome for her wedding portion, would not now look upon it as a *mésalliance* not to be thought of for a moment.

Lady Willoughby and Frank were the two ingots of refined gold which she had fondly thought would remain to her, after the fire of adversity had melted the dross away.

The doctor's hesitation dispelled the dream; but she clung with renewed tenacity to the hope.

Mr. Smedley had heard rumours of the engagement between Captain Willoughby and Miss Maynard; but he knew too much of the world, and of Lady Willoughby's worldly nature, to feel any doubt as to the

course she would pursue under the altered circumstances. And so, between his wish to prepare Ellen for what was to come, and his fear of inflicting pain upon her, he hesitated and blundered, and looked uncomfortable; and without assuming to be in the secret, and so having the privilege of condoling with her, he conveyed the hint, and expressed his sympathy, as effectually and delicately as the most skilful diplomatist could have done. Perceiving that Ellen remained silent and thoughtful, he withdrew on the plea of professional business, and stepping into his gig, drove off to Willoughby Court.

Her ladyship was at home, and received him most graciously.

"Oh! my dear doctor!" she exclaimed, with a great deal of affable condescension, "you are the very man I most wished to see!"

"I trust your ladyship has not taken a

fresh cold," said Mr. Smedley. "What sort of night did you pass?"

"Wretched! wretched!" sighed her ladyship, in tones of the deepest self-commiseration.

"Cough troublesome?" suggested the doctor.

"Not very. It was the mind—the mind, doctor," said she, shaking her head tragically.

"And in what way can I 'minister to a mind diseased?' " he asked.

"I think you can, my good sir," she said; "it is all about that poor unfortunate girl, Miss Maynard. You see her frequently, I believe?"

"I have just left her," he replied.

"Were you aware of the existence of a silly sort of romantic, childish affection, or rather I should call it flirtation, between her and Captain Willoughby, before he went abroad?" asked her ladyship.

"I have heard of it, certainly," said Mr. Smedley, coldly, "but as a serious engagement, sanctioned by both families; and not by any means as a romantic, childish affair."

"Well, I must confess I was so foolish as to let it pass at the time," said her ladyship. "I looked upon it as a mere boyish fancy on Frank's part, that he would get over as soon as he saw a little more of the world."

"And did not your ladyship take into consideration the effect all this might have upon Miss Maynard?"

"Oh! my dear sir," simpered Lady Willoughby, with an affected little laugh, "young ladies don't die for love now-a-days!"

"I would not undertake to say that," said the doctor, gravely; "though I think Miss Maynard has too much pride and dignity of character to die, even if she were jilted."

"Jilted, sir!" repeated the lady, indig-

nantly, "do you mean to apply that term to my son?"

"No, madam; for I have too high an opinion of him to think he will do anything to deserve it," said the provoking doctor.

The lady fidgeted, and looked uneasy. Then taking up a letter from the table beside her, she continued, "Whatever your opinion on that point may be, doctor, I rely upon your preserving the strictest secrecy concerning what I am about to communicate to you. I especially wish that Miss Maynard may not become acquainted with it."

"Madam," he replied, "a secret with me is always inviolable."

"I know that, my dear sir, I know it well," said the lady in her blindest manner, "and therefore it is that I wish to confide in you; besides which, you are such a friend to poor Miss Maynard! This letter is from my son. It arrived yesterday evening, and

in addition to the awkwardness of my relations with the poor dear girl, was the cause of my rest being so broken last night."

"I trust Captain Willoughby is well?" said Mr. Smedley, hastily, for he liked and esteemed the young man as much as he contemned the paltry pride of his mother.

"Yes, thank Heaven! He is quite well," replied Lady Willoughby; "but he talks so extravagantly about his 'sweet Ellen,' as he calls her!—and he has even enclosed a note, with a hundred apologies for its brevity, as the mail was just closing. Of course I cannot think of giving it to her, under the present altered state of affairs; but what am I to do?"

"I should imagine the course was quite clear," said Mr. Smedley; "as your son is of age, and entitled to judge for himself, you have nothing to do, it seems to me, but to deliver the note to the young lady."

"But he does not know what a change

has taken place in her circumstances," said her ladyship; "formerly, though the match was by no means so good a one as he had a right to expect, it was not so outrageously bad. She came of a good family, and we expected would have had at least ten thousand pounds; but her foolish father chose to lend it to that speculating cousin of his, and it is all lost, so that I understand she has only a few hundreds left. It is really most embarrassing."

"I never heard Captain Willoughby accused of being a fortune hunter," said the doctor, knitting his brows; "and I neither can nor will believe it of him, even if his own mother says so. I presume that he loved Ellen Maynard's self, and not Ellen Maynard's money-bags; and I am sure I only do him justice, and give utterance to his own sentiments, when I say that if he had heard of the calamities that have fallen upon her, his expressions of affection would

have been much more tender than they are; nay, that probably he would have written the long letter to her, and the note and apologies to his mother."

"Sir!" exclaimed Lady Willoughby, angrily, "you presume upon my condescension in asking your advice and assistance."

"No more, madam, than when I give you a nauseous draught when you ask my advice on other matters," retorted the doctor; "I counsel you, in either case, according to my best judgment of what is right and fitting."

"You are a very obstinate man!" said the lady, forcing a smile, and assuming a playful tone; "but in the present instance I really do not want your advice so much as your assistance. Will you give me that?"

"I'll give no pledge in the dark," replied the cautious adviser; "tell me what you want, and I'll tell you just as promptly whether I can do it or not."

"I want you, then, to intimate to Miss Maynard, as a friend to both parties, that this foolish engagement must be broken off."

"I am sorry that I cannot comply with your ladyship's wishes," said the doctor; "in the first place, as Miss Maynard has not taken me into her confidence, nor even in the remotest way alluded to her engagement, it would be very indelicate in me to begin advising her upon the subject."

"But, my dear sir, as coming from *me*," interrupted Lady Willoughby.

"But, my dear madam," interrupted Mr. Smedley in his turn, "my acquaintance with the young lady does not warrant any such interference; and, in the second place, I could not undertake this very disagreeable office as a friend to *both* parties, unless authorized by at least one of them. Now, my firm conviction is, that I should be doing precisely the reverse of what Captain Willoughby would desire."

"But *I*, sir," she exclaimed, snappishly, "*I* authorize you."

"Am I to understand that it was your ladyship to whom Miss Maynard was to be married?" asked the doctor, drily.

"Sir," cried the lady, starting up in a violent passion, and ringing the bell in a way that accorded with her temper, "I see that your intention is to annoy and insult me. I wish you a very good morning!"

And, as if to show that the conference was at an end, and at the same time to signify her utter contempt for her visitor, she took up a book, leaned back in the corner of the sofa, and pretended to be wholly unconscious of his presence.

The doctor, in nowise disconcerted, and with a curl of the lip that would have made her mad if she had seen it, so expressive was it of conscious superiority, made her a sarcastically profound bow, and departed.

CHAPTER III.

. THE FALSE FRIEND, AND THE TRUE ONE.

As soon as the door closed behind Mr. Smedley, Lady Willoughby flung upon the table the volume she had pretended to be reading.

“There is nothing left for it now,” she soliloquized, “but to see the girl myself, and try to bring her to reason. It is very provoking! I had counted so fully upon Smedley’s help, and there is no one else whom I should dare to trust. Sewell, as a lawyer, would be the most proper person to employ; but then he can’t keep a secret from his wife, and she is a walking advertisement. I would not for the world have any one suspect that

I had interfered to stop this match ! I should wish it to be thought her own doing entirely ; and she is far too proud to say anything to the contrary. Perhaps it will be best, after all, for me to speak to her, and I'll do it at once."

As the doctor drove his gig into the town, Lady Willoughby's carriage swept past him.

"Ay, ay, my lady," he muttered, "go and do your dirty work yourself. That's more to the purpose than setting honest folks to do it for you."

Poor Ellen's heart bounded when she saw Lady Willoughby's carriage stop at the door of her abode. She could scarcely refrain from running downstairs to meet her visitor ; but decorum prevailed, and she sat panting and blushing, and almost as delighted as though it were Frank himself who was ascending the stairs.

As her ladyship entered, Ellen started up to greet her ; but there was a cold, con-

descending, formally sympathetic something in Lady Willoughby's manner that sent the warm blood curdling back to the poor girl's heart.

"My dear Miss Maynard," she began, "I am truly glad to see that you can bear up so wonderfully against your many severe afflictions."

"Miss Maynard!" thought Ellen; then she added aloud, "I have sought for strength and consolation where my beloved parents always taught me to seek them, madam, and where they assured me I should never seek in vain."

"That's right. There is nothing like religion when we are in trouble," said her ladyship, approvingly, as though she were giving her sanction to some remedy for headache, or indigestion; "I should have called on you sooner, my dear, but I have been very ill,—confined to my bed for a whole week,—obliged to call in Smedley."

"Indeed, madam!" said Ellen, with grave surprise; "I am deeply grieved to hear you say that." And grieved she certainly was that Frank's mother should tell such fibs. She had seen Lady Willoughby, two days before, coming out of a jeweller's shop; and as for "calling in Smedley," *that* Ellen knew to be a favourite pastime of her ladyship.

"Yes, indeed, very ill," said the visitor, dolefully; "but my own sufferings have not prevented my thinking a good deal about you, my dear girl. I have been constantly wondering what you intend to do, and how you mean to earn your living."

"Earn my living!" repeated Ellen, vacantly, and unable at once to appreciate, in its full extent, the cold heartlessness of the woman whom she had learned to regard as her future mother-in-law.

"Yes, my poor dear, of course it must come to that," sighed her ladyship, with

affected sympathy ; “ the trifle, as I understand from Sewell, that has been saved from the wreck of your father’s property would not be enough to exist upon ; but if you nurse it carefully, it will be something to fall back upon in a rainy day ; and, in the meantime, the excellent education you have received will always enable you to command a high salary as a governess.”

“ A governess ! ” repeated poor Ellen, more aghast than ever.

“ No doubt your proud spirit revolts at the name, but——”

“ No, madam,” said Ellen, calmly, and even with some dignity in her manner, “ pride has nothing to do with it ; for my father always told me that the office of a teacher—a *conscientious* teacher—was the most honourable of any ; and I remember that *my* governess was my mother’s dearest friend, and that my father treated her with the highest consideration as long as she lived.

No—*pride* is not the cause of my emotion. It is grief—amazement—I scarcely know what mingled feelings—added to the recollection of a circumstance which *you* appear to have forgotten,—that I am the betrothed wife of your son.”

“ Ah ! good heavens !” cried Lady Willoughby, bursting into tears, or affecting to do so ; “ surely you cannot be so cruel as to drag my poor infatuated boy into penury ! If you are capable of such an act of selfishness, you are not the noble-minded girl I have always taken you for.”

“ Say no more about selfishness, Lady Willoughby,” said Ellen, in a low but very firm voice, while her eyes flashed with a smothered fire ; “ I see my error now. I had imagined that I should find you superior to the rest ; but it is not so. Your son, too, may be but a frothy flake upon the waves of fortune, that will float from me with the receding tide ; but I cannot believe it—I

think better of him. Amid the general change of all whom I thought friends, I think he, at least, will prove true."

"And you will bind him to his promise, given in a moment of youthful folly," said her ladyship, "and——"

"Pardon me, madam," interrupted Ellen, with a smile of ineffable contempt, "he was four-and-twenty when he gave it, and could hardly plead the indiscretion of youth, were he so mean as to wish it. But I release him from his promise unconditionally."

"Oh! my dear child! Now, indeed, I see you are the same generous Ellen that I have loved so tenderly all her life!"

And the old hypocrite extended her arms to embrace her victim; but Ellen drew back haughtily.

"Hear me to the end, madam," she said; "I will give you no promise not to marry him, if he proves worthy of my affection, and renews his suit to me."

"This is downright impudence!" cried her ladyship, her face swelling with rage.

"No; it is simply justice to Captain Willoughby," said Ellen.

"You must promise solemnly not to write to him," said her ladyship.

"There is no *must* in the case," said Ellen, calmly; "but I shall not write. You may tell him what you like, and give what version you choose of the present interview; if he is what I believe and hope, nothing will alter his opinion of me. In return, I believe his professions of affection were sincere, and I have no right to doubt him, until his own conduct or his own words compel me to do so."

"In plain English," exclaimed her ladyship, turning pale with anger, "you mean to stick to him like a leech, and set me, and decency, and every kind of propriety at defiance!"

"It is useless to prolong this painful

conference, madam," said Ellen, rising with great dignity; "if your ladyship were more composed, I might be able to make you understand me better; as it is, I shall say no more than that it is my intention to leave Stoke Barton to-morrow. I shall not write to your son, nor communicate with him in any way, directly or indirectly. Good morning, madam."

Her ladyship had probably never received so summary a dismissal since she quitted the nursery; nor had she ever felt so completely overawed by any one, as she was by the poor orphan whom she considered unworthy to be the wife of her son.

"Permit me to remark, Miss Maynard," she said, gathering herself up, and trying to assume a manner as dignified as that which had come naturally to Ellen—"permit me to remark that if you have the good fortune to enter the service of a family of distinction, you must endeavour to observe

a more respectful demeanour towards your superiors, if you desire to keep your place."

By this last broadside of vulgarity she thought she had stricken her adversary to the earth; and sailed majestically towards the door. Ellen quickly opened it, and with a low curtsy, and in a tone, the seemingly unaffected humility of which rendered the sarcasm all the keener, replied, "I thank you for your advice, madam. I trust I shall always treat my superiors with respect, whether I find them in high or humble life."

Lady Willoughby had a great horror of anything which she considered vulgar, so rather than have an altercation on the stairs, she shut her lips tight upon the angry retort that rose to them, and stepped into her carriage.

Ellen watched it from the window, as it whirled away down the street. Two large

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scalding tears trembled on her eyelashes. Pride would allow no more to follow.

“I was prepared to welcome her, and love her as a mother,” she said, “and this is our meeting, and this is our parting! And Frank, too—dear, noble-hearted Frank! How this will grieve him! Perhaps I ought to have shown more forbearance towards *his* mother. But I must not think of that now; I have too much to do. And there is Mr. Smedley coming down the street.”

Although after her mother's death Ellen had considerably reduced the quantity of household goods and chattels which were reserved from the auction, she still retained her father's easy chair, and some other articles too cumbersome to be carried about with her. These she intrusted to the care of Mr. Smedley, and received from him the address of a respectable person in London, at whose house she might find suitable lodgings, while seeking for a situation.

The good doctor had seen Lady Willoughby leave the house, and rightly divining the cause of Ellen's flushed face and agitated manner, he forbore to notice it, but listened patiently to her incoherent conversation, and, when she was more collected, gave her some useful hints as to the best means of carrying out her wishes. He particularly recommended her to call upon a religious bookseller, to whom her father had been well known, and through whose influence she would be likely to obtain such a situation as she desired.

There was one thing that Ellen had still to arrange, which pressed heavily on her mind, but she scarcely knew how to manage it. She had resolved not to write to Frank Willoughby; yet she wished to leave a clue to her address, if he chose to seek for it. She could not do this openly without taking Mr. Smedley into her confidence, which would have been anything but agreeable to

her pride and delicacy. Just as he was bidding her good-bye, despair suggested an expedient.

"I believe," she said, "that there is nothing owing either on my dear parents' or my own account; but as I may have overlooked some trifle, it will be advisable to let you know my address wherever I may go, if you will allow me to trouble you so far."

"Don't speak of trouble, my dear young lady," said the good doctor, retaining her hand while he spoke, "it will be a pleasure to me to serve you in any way. And I must confess I was in hopes of hearing of you occasionally, setting aside other considerations."

"Certainly, I will write sometimes, since you are so kind as to wish it," said Ellen, with so much smothered emotion that he saw plainly how friendless she must feel to be so deeply affected by such a slight mark of kindly interest in her fate; "and I am

sure I may rely on you not to let my address or my proceedings be known to any one in this town."

"I will be careful," he replied, "but you know it may transpire through other friends——"

"Other friends!" she interrupted, "oh! sir, I have none! There is not a single person in all this place to whom I would communicate my fate, whatever it might be, or to whom I would apply for help in time of trouble."

"Surely you judge them too harshly, my young friend," said Mr. Smedley. "A whole townful of people cannot be all bad."

"I do not mean to say they are," replied Ellen, "but I cannot stay here to seek the few good ones. Even those whom I found most unpleasant have doubtless an amiable side to their characters; in fact I know they have, for that was the side I always saw when they were delighted visitors at

my father's house, and partakers of his hospitality. Now they are all changed. Those who used to flatter me seem delighted at the opportunity of overwhelming me with good advice; nay, in more than one instance I detected but too plainly a degree of triumph over my altered fate that seemed to me almost incredible."

"You will not suspect *me* of taking advantage of any alteration in outward circumstances to give utterance to unwelcome truths," said the doctor; "and what I am about to mention may probably throw some light upon this point. I had so often heard you accused of being proud and haughty, that, until I had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with you, I took it for granted that such was your actual character. But when I saw you in your home relations—obedient to your parents, polite and winning to your equals, and respectful to your servants—I thought that surely never was

young lady so little understood, or so much maligned. For a considerable time you were an enigma to me, until I chanced to be present on one occasion when Mrs. Easton called to make inquiries after your father's health. Now Mrs. Easton was one of those who had most loudly found fault with the haughtiness of your manners, and I was astounded to remark the servility and obsequiousness of her demeanour towards you."

"Mrs. Easton was a contemptible sycophant," said Ellen.

"Precisely so," rejoined the doctor; "but permit me to say that you were hardly wise to show so plainly your appreciation of her character."

"She has fully justified me by her recent conduct," said Ellen; "from being the most abject flatterer, no one has seemed to rejoice so much in my loss of fortune; no one has assumed so much the airs of a dictatorial

adviser. So far from regretting my rejection of her flatteries, I assure you that few things give me more satisfaction, because she has shown so completely that there was not an atom of friendliness or real liking under all her fulsome praises."

"But, my dear young friend," said Mr. Smedley, "if you had rejected her adulation with less indignant sternness, you would have found her less willing to crow over you in your fallen fortunes. I have known Mrs. Easton do many kind actions."

"Oh, yes!" said Ellen, with a bitter smile, "her name is always conspicuous enough on the subscription list of every charity."

The doctor made a wry face. He felt he had the worst of the argument.

"I see I must give in," he said; "but allow me, nevertheless, to draw the inference to which I was leading, at the risk of your thinking me, too, an attendant upon fortune's changes."

"I shall never believe that of you, sir," said Ellen, hastily. "Do you not remember that the first time you saw me, you took me to task pretty sharply for something I had done?"

"I do, indeed, my dear—I beg pardon, I mean my dear Miss Maynard—and I also recollect my astonishment at the meek acquiescence of the young lady of whose haughtiness I had heard so much."

"You told me the truth when others flattered," said Ellen; "and now that the flatterers are all blown away, you have still the right to say whatever you please."

"It is simply this," said Mr. Smedley; "when you are out in the world, and it is of importance to your own interests to win 'golden opinions from all sorts of people,' let flattery pass, as part of the current coin of society. If you take it at its true value it does you no harm; and you have seen by experience that a too Roman rejection of it may create enemies."

"I thank you for your warning, sir," said Ellen, smiling sadly; "but it is needless. I shall have no flatterers now."

"Don't be too sure of that," said the doctor. "You may meet with a little of it, in the form of polite speeches, even from those with whom you wish to form professional engagements; and then, you know, if you should start and look indignant——"

"I understand you perfectly," said Ellen, interrupting him as he hesitated to express his meaning too plainly, "you mean that it would be well for me to cultivate more humility of manner. It is not the first time to-day that I have been told to behave respectfully to my superiors; but *your* lesson is given with kindness and delicacy, and I thank you heartily for it, and will try to profit by it. And now, my kind friend, farewell; your time is precious, and I too have still many things to do. I will keep you informed of my movements; and you,

I feel sure, will be *very* careful to whom you confide my address."

"I may confide it, then," said the doctor, "if some *very* urgent reason is pressed upon me?"

"I leave it to your own discretion," said Ellen, hurriedly; "good-bye—good-bye!"

"Good-bye, and God bless and prosper you! You may trust me implicitly," said Mr. Smedley, in a voice choked with emotion.

Ellen listened with a quivering lip till she heard the street door shut behind him, and then throwing herself upon the sofa, she burst into a flood of tears.

"Pride!—yes, still pride!" she exclaimed, starting up, and making a strong effort to overcome her emotion. "The only friend I have! The only one who has not changed with fortune, and I must needs hurry him away lest he should see how keenly I felt at parting with him! I wish he would come

back! but I'll be honest upon paper; and when I write I will tell him how grieved I felt when he left me. Yet I wish I could press once more, and more warmly, the hand that ministered to my father in his sufferings, and which alone was extended in true friendliness to his orphan!"

All that night Ellen Maynard spent in packing and preparing for her journey, and at three o'clock in the morning she departed for London by the mail train.

She had never before visited the metropolis; for her father had been too deeply devoted to his clerical duties to leave them while he had health and strength to perform them; and her mother had entertained such a nervous dread of railway travelling, that she was actually kept at home by the very means which should have made her leave it with more ease and frequency.

CHAPTER IV.

ELLEN BEGINS THE BATTLE OF LIFE.

THOSE who visit London for pleasure are very differently affected by their first entry into its wilderness of streets, from those who go there, alone and friendless, to seek a livelihood.

To the former it is a fairy land of wonder and delight; to the latter it is a troubled ocean on which they are putting forth, perhaps without chart or pilot, and with more or less imperfect sails and rigging.

Hard indeed is the lot of those who are also without ballast, but such was not Ellen Maynard's case. She had left the greater part of her money in the hands of the

lawyer who had always transacted her father's business, a man for whom she entertained a high respect in his professional capacity, but for whom she had so little sympathy or friendship that she used to describe him as a "respected aversion."

For her immediate use she had retained only about twenty pounds, which she fully expected would suffice for all her wants until she should be in a position to support herself by her own exertions.

Ellen was a very steady-minded girl, and not at all prone to indulge in nervous fancies; but a sickening sense of loneliness came over her, as she passed through the crowds of strange faces, and looking round at the piles of comfortable houses, knew that there was not one friendly door to open at her approach,—not one hand that would be extended to take hers in a kindly grasp,—not one eye that would brighten

into recognition when it met hers. Now indeed she felt the full value of Mr. Smedley's kind forethought in giving her the address of a person with whom she could lodge. She found it to be a neat house in a quiet street. The latter quality, however, being merely relative to the more crowded thoroughfares, she did not discover at first, but innocently thought she must have dropped into the very centre of London noise and bustle. Having arranged the terms of her occupancy of a large bedroom, with the privilege of receiving business calls in the parlour, and a moderate scale of charges for boarding with the meek-looking widow who owned the house, she drew up an advertisement, stating her accomplishments, and the profession of her late father, and sallied forth to pay a visit to the religious bookseller, and to beg him to allow the answers to be left for her at his shop.

Mr. Morton received her courteously ;

listened to her respectfully; condoled with her in set terms upon the lamented decease of her excellent father; gave instructions to his assistants to take in her letters and give her address to inquirers; and with many protestations that he would do everything in his power to further her interests, bowed her out. Ellen knew very little of the world, but she had an intuitive conviction that before her feet had re-crossed the threshold, herself, her affairs, and his own promises, had all vanished from his mind as completely as last night's dreams. She had no right to expect anything more on her own merits—but her father! Alas! poor Ellen! There her ignorance of the world became manifest. Her father had spent his useful life in the unostentatious performance of his duties. He was not a popular preacher. He had never had the honour of delivering an oration before the Queen, and getting it advertised in the

Times for years afterwards. If he had, a visit from his daughter would have been readily remembered by the religious bookseller.

Ellen returned, sad enough at heart, to her temporary abode. She knew not wherefore she felt more depressed in spirits than when she had set out. Her object was attained, and she was at liberty to use the name of one of the most respectable men in London as a guarantee for her own trustworthiness. She had formed no higher hope before she saw him, and the urbanity of his manners was unexceptionable; but it seemed as though she had come in contact with a moral iceberg.

She spent several days in visiting some of the principal sights and exhibitions. But notwithstanding the lively interest she felt in all she saw, the time passed drearily enough, for she was alone.

Each morning she called to inquire for

letters, and received several from governess agents, and such folks, but none that promised to lead to the realization of her wishes.

On the evening of the sixth day she was setting out to order another insertion of her advertisement, when a visitor was announced. Her heart beat quick when she entered the parlour, and found herself in the presence of a tall spare man of about forty-five years of age.

His black hair was already grizzled, and his dark face was deeply lined by the furrows left by fierce passions or deep suffering, or perhaps a combination of the two. His bushy eyebrows overhung eyes which seemed to pierce into the very thoughts of the person he addressed, and which, joined to a high aquiline nose, gave him as much resemblance to a bird of prey as it was possible for a very handsome man to bear.

Ellen did not much like his appearance, and she, moreover, felt somewhat overawed by the steady gaze of those formidable black eyes; but she betrayed nothing of this in her manner, which was quiet and sedate.

"I presume," began the stranger, without a moment's hesitation, "that I have the honour of addressing the lady who advertised in the *Times* for a situation as a teacher?"

"I did advertise, sir," replied Ellen, "and left my address with a bookseller who, having known my father for many years, could answer for the respectability of my family. I can give no other reference, as I have not been similarly employed before."

"But I suppose you have friends in the town where you lived?" said he, inquiringly.

"No—none to whom I would apply in such a case as this," she replied. "I was very differently situated there. I was

supposed to be heiress to a considerable fortune, and now, through the misconduct of a relation, I am obliged to work for my own living."

"Have you no other relations?" asked the stranger.

"There is no one with whom I can claim kindred, except the cousin I have just mentioned," said Ellen; "and even if I knew where to find him, I would not apply to him. Not," she added, seeing that an incomprehensible, grim smile curled the visitor's lip, "from an un-Christian spirit of resentment for the wrong he has done me, but because I have every reason to believe that his misconduct was the means of hastening my dear father's death."

"Humph!" said the stranger, "so you have no friends at all? What! Not even a young lady correspondent?"

"I have told you already, sir, that Mr. Morton, from whom you obtained my

address, is my reference," said Ellen, with some resentment; "if his testimony is insufficient, it is useless to talk further on the subject."

"Nay—nay—you are too hasty," said the stranger; "and, like most hasty persons, you misinterpret the drift of my observations. You must understand that I have a great objection to change;—it unsettles the minds of pupils, and interferes with their progress. Now, I have generally observed that young ladies leaving home for the first time, as you are doing, are apt to take fright when any difficulty presents itself, and run away home to papa or mamma, or to some dear, kind, misguided aunt or uncle, whose doors are always open to receive them. I was desirous of learning whether you had any such relative, and the discovery that you have not makes me all the more willing to conclude an engagement with you."

If Ellen had had more experience of the wickedness of the world, this speech would have roused her suspicions; but she only replied, sadly, "I little imagined that my greatest misfortune could be any advantage to me."

"You are a musician," said the gentleman, without noticing her remark; "will you oblige me with a specimen of your talent? The piano does not seem first-rate, but I will make every allowance for that."

Without a word, Ellen sat down to Mrs. Mason's old-fashioned piano, and played from memory one of the most brilliant pieces she knew. Her auditor seemed perfectly absorbed in attention.

"Excellent! excellent!" he murmured; "how came you to think of the drudgery of governess-ship, when you might make your fortune so easily as a concert player?"

"I prefer the quieter life," she said;

"besides, I know my father and mother would have been shocked at the idea of my becoming a public performer. I studied music closely from a natural love of it, and now I shall be fully satisfied if it enables me to earn my bread."

"Earn your bread!" he repeated, derisively; "it should earn you an alderman's feast—no, that's too earthly,—it should earn you nectar and ambrosia, and every delicious fruit of the tropics besides! Will you favour me with something else,—something less brilliant, but more expressive of feeling and emotion?"

She reflected for a few moments, and then played one of those exquisite Songs without Words of Mendelssohn's, in which the inarticulate notes seem labouring to express more than language could utter.

As she played on, the fierce domineering eyes drooped and quailed, and he bowed his head upon his hand, and sighed, and trem-

bled. As she glanced furtively at him, she wondered why she had felt overawed and subdued before him. The music formed round her a magic circle within which she, the enchantress, stood secure in her might, and that proud, stern man was but her vassal and her slave.

“And you sing, too?” he asked, when the performance was over.

Without answering a word, she complied with the insinuated request.

Her voice was full and rich in tone, and had been carefully cultivated. The song she chose was a plaintive English ballad, and she had the good taste not to overload it with roulades and shakes.

The visitor expressed his gratification more by manner than words, and after a while the old fierce look returned to his face, and his keen eyes again shot through her.

“It is an actual profanation,” he began,

with his grim smile, "to talk of worldly affairs immediately after listening to such celestial music; but business *will* be attended to. Are you willing to enter into an engagement with me to instruct my only son, a boy whose education has been sadly neglected? and do you consider a hundred a year a sufficient remuneration?"

Ellen had not thought of aspiring to more than half that sum, but she took good care not to betray the satisfaction she felt at the liberal offer.

"A boy!" she repeated; "I did not contemplate teaching boys. How old is he, sir?"

"Upon my word, his mother could answer that question better than I can," replied the stranger, in a careless tone; "I only know that he is a sad dunce, though not naturally a fool; and as he has a passion for music, I think that may be made very serviceable in bringing forward his mental powers, and

inducing him to attend to his studies. Now, as I am compelled to come to a conclusion this evening with you or another lady, I must trouble you for a prompt reply."

"Then, sir, I must say I see no reason for declining the engagement," replied Ellen.

"Very good," said the stranger; "now we had better make a memorandum in writing, and then there can be no mistakes or misunderstandings afterwards. May I trouble you for pen, ink, and paper?"

Ellen placed writing-materials before him.

"We had better make the agreement for a twelvemonth," said he, after he had written the words, *I, Reginald Hawkshawe*, "or I will pay you a year's salary in advance, if you prefer it."

"That is quite unnecessary, sir, thank you," said Ellen, who saw nothing but kindness and liberality in this proposal; "I am in no want of ready money."

"Very good," said Mr. Hawkshawe, and proceeded to pen a very concise agreement, by which he bound himself under a penalty of five hundred pounds to retain Ellen in her office for a whole year; and then he wrote out a similar document which bound her to remain as teacher to his son for the same period, and under the same penalty.

"There," he said, after he had read them rapidly over to her, "now you may feel that you have something to rely upon. I cannot play any shabby tricks, even if I wished it. Just put your name to this little document, and it is done."

Most people have a nervous dread of *signing their names* (it would be well for some if the instinctive repugnance were a little stronger!), and Ellen did not see the use of this solemn, written agreement.

"I really do not think this is at all necessary," she said, as she turned the paper over and over.

"It is entirely for your own benefit," said Mr. Hawkshawe, in the tone of one who felt hurt by an unjust suspicion; "I should advise you to sign it. But do just as you please."

He turned to look out of the window, and in a moment his quick ear detected the scratching of the pen as Ellen wrote her name.

"That will do," said he, folding the papers; "you will keep that, and I this. And now, as I have imperative business that calls me home this evening, I shall be glad if you can accompany me. Have you any friends whom you wish to take leave of?"

"I have no friends in town," replied Ellen; "but I should like to call and thank the bookseller for obtaining me a situation so promptly."

"I was informed at the shop that he is gone to Paris for a few days," said Mr.

Hawkshawe, "so it's of no use to call. Write to him; that will do as well. Your luggage is, no doubt, all ready for packing. Can you complete your arrangements," he said, looking at his watch, "and be off in half an hour?"

"That is a very short notice," said Ellen, dubiously. "I must settle with my landlady before I go, and she is from home, and may not be back in time."

"Will five pounds cover the debt?" he inquired.

"It cannot amount to half so much," said Ellen. "I have been here but a few days."

"Then, as time is just now more precious to me than anything else, permit me to pay the penalty of my haste," said he, taking a five-pound note from his pocket-book; "enclose this for her to cover all expenses, and compensate for your abrupt departure."

"Thank you, sir," said Ellen, rather

haughtily, "but I prefer paying my own bills."

"Nay—it is but just that I should pay this," said Mr. Hawkshawe, "for it is to accommodate myself."

"I will at least defer it to the last moment," said Ellen, "and in the meanwhile I will get my luggage ready."

She made a slight inclination, and left him to his own reflections. These seemed agreeable enough, for he smiled and even laughed softly as he paced up and down the little parlour.

As time flew on he looked at his watch, and when it wanted only ten minutes to the completion of the half-hour he went out, and speedily returned in a cab.

"Will one cab be sufficient to convey all Miss Maynard's luggage?" he demanded of the servant.

"Oh, la, yes, sir," replied the girl. "She only brought two big boxes and a little one, besides her music."

"Be so good as to tell her the cab is at the door," said he, as he re-entered the parlour and resumed his walk.

Mr. Hawkshawe rubbed his hands when he saw the cabman arranging the young lady's handsome trunks upon the vehicle, and stared when he saw that the "music" was a guitar case, she having said nothing of her proficiency on that instrument.

The half-hour had nearly expired, but Ellen had not yet come downstairs. Mr. Hawkshawe began to manifest strong symptoms of impatience; he looked out into the passage,—placed the bank-note in an envelope ready for her to direct it to the landlady,—listened at the foot of the stairs,—and, lastly, went to the front door, and looked up and down the street, speculating upon every advancing female of respectable appearance, and dreading to see her walk into the house with the air of its mistress.

He was neither a thief, nor (in the

ordinary sense of the word) a swindler, that he was so anxious to get Ellen off before the return of poor Mrs. Mason; but he was fearful lest the good lady, in greater worldly experience, should prompt her young lodger to ask him a series of questions which he desired not to answer, or even to insist upon a delay, and the production of references, which would have been highly inconvenient and disagreeable.

The last minute of the allotted time was just expiring, when, to his great satisfaction, he heard Miss Maynard's voice speaking to the servant. As he turned towards her, a lady in widow's weeds, whom he had watched as she came down the street, entered the house, and advanced towards Ellen, who exclaimed, "I am so glad you are come, Mrs. Mason! This has saved me a world of anxiety. I have obtained a situation, and am obliged to set off at once; and I don't know how much I owe you."

"I'll make out the bill for you in five minutes," said Mrs. Mason, going towards the parlour.

"Five minutes will lose us the train," said Mr. Hawkshawe; "pray say in a word about what the amount is."

"Oh, dear! it puts me in such a flurry! I'm afraid I shall forget something," said Mrs. Mason, nervously. "Let me see—there's ten shillings the room, and six days' board—that's eighteen shillings, you know, Miss Maynard."

"One pound eight," said the stranger.
"What else?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose so," said the widow, looking quite startled at his abrupt arithmetic, "but I am so flurried, I really can't reckon. And I think that's all, miss, except washing sheets and towels, and cleaning boots. Because, you know," she added, with a half-sigh, "you only took the room for one week certain."

"Nevertheless, as you would not have turned me out at a moment's notice, I shall pay for another week," said Ellen, placing two sovereigns and a half in Mrs. Mason's hand.

"Thank you, Miss Maynard; but a bargain's a bargain," said the widow, taking the money, however; "I will write you out a receipt directly."

"We shall miss the train!" exclaimed Mr. Hawkshawe, impatiently. "Never mind the receipt."

"Good-bye, Mrs. Mason," said Ellen.

"Good-bye, my dear young lady. I'm sorry to lose you so soon," said the widow, squeezing Ellen's proffered hand; and then drawing her back a little, she added, in a whisper, "Do write a line to me, my dear, just to let me know you are safe and well. I don't half like the looks of him, I can tell you. Did you have good references?"

"References!" repeated Ellen; "no! I did not dream of asking for them."

"Then ask for them now, and wait till to-morrow," said Mrs. Mason; "you can go as well to-morrow as to-day."

"But my luggage!" said Ellen, looking towards the cab.

"Never mind that," urged Mrs. Mason; "have it brought in again."

"It will appear so foolish," said Ellen, with hesitation; "and if all is right——"

"It's all very well to say that," said the widow, nervously; "but suppose all is *wrong*—what then?"

"I must entreat you not to delay any longer, Miss Maynard," said Mr. Hawkshawe, who had missed her, and hurried back again. "Allow me to hand you to the carriage. Good-day, ma'am."

He took Ellen's half-reluctant hand, hurled one look at Mrs. Mason that collapsed her into a state of non-resistance, and bore off his prey.

CHAPTER V.

ELLEN IS INTRODUCED TO THE HAWKSHAWE
FAMILY.

MRS. MASON, it will easily be perceived, was not a woman of much energy or decision of character. Like many persons of her sex and class, she was apt enough to suspect danger, but not so prompt in taking measures to combat it. She looked anxiously after the cab as it rattled along the street, muttering to herself, "Dear, dear! if I only knew what railway station they was going to! but he told the cabman so low, as if he was determined I should not hear what he said."

It was not till an empty cab had passed

in the same direction that Mrs. Mason reflected that she might have called it, followed, and spoken to Ellen at the station. But by the time this idea was fully grasped by her not over-vigorous intellect, the empty vehicle was past hailing, and that containing the object of her anxiety had turned out of the street, but whether to the right or left, she had been too much occupied with the other cab to remark.

Presently a friend dropped in to tea, to whom, as a matter of course, the whole affair was recounted; and as the visitor possessed a retentive memory, and was deeply read in police reports, she was at no loss for dozens of parallel cases in which young ladies, imprudently advertising for situations, had been decoyed away, and never heard of more. There was a curious coincidence in all these adventures, that the "villain" was never one who might have pleaded the impetuosity of youth as an

excuse; but was invariably a man of middle age; "old enough to know better," as the gossips very justly remarked.

Whatever might have been the fate to which they supposed Ellen Maynard to be consigned, the wildest flight of their imaginations never came near the truth.

She was hurried to the Great Western Station. The train was just about to start, and before she had time to ask the name of the place to which she was going, she had commenced her journey towards it in a carriage appropriated to ladies exclusively, in which Mr. Hawkshawe had placed her, with every demonstration of its being done entirely out of consideration for herself, though she could not help reflecting that the separation also put it out of her power to ask him any inconvenient questions.

There was only one passenger besides herself in the carriage; and as this was an old lady who was either very cross

or very deaf, Ellen had little prospect of keeping herself awake by a lively or interesting conversation. The old lady snored in a most monotonous and infectious manner, but Ellen resisted the drowsy influence, and kept on the alert to catch the names of the stations at which they stopped, which she did where practicable, by reading the name; and where she could not do this, by trying to decipher the strange sounds uttered by the guards and porters, who seem to imagine that they are calling out the name of the place for the information of the passengers, while for the most part they are simply talking hieroglyphics.

At one station, however, where they stayed longer than usual, Mr. Hawkshawe appeared for a moment at the door with a glass of hot mulled wine in his hand, which he entreated her to drink. While she sipped it, he ran away to fetch her some sandwiches, and on

his return he had only time to take back the empty glass and scramble into his own place before they were off again.

Whatever cause Ellen might subsequently have for disliking Mr. Hawkshawe, she never for one moment suspected him of having put a narcotic into the mulled wine. If he had guessed that she watched the stations, and wished her to desist, he could not have done better than administer that wicked beverage, which has a soporific tendency of its own that, under ordinary circumstances, requires no extraneous aid.

From a deficiency of steam, or some other cause, the train proceeded more slowly than usual; the panting of the engine came at longer intervals; the old lady's snoring was more prolonged and more somniferous, and Ellen fell fast asleep.

At the next station a pair of keen black eyes looked in at the window, and instantly withdrew, as if fearful of awakening her by

too fixed a gaze. At the next and the next they peered in again exultingly; and at the fourth Ellen found herself, before she could entirely shake off the trammels of a profound slumber, seated in a close carriage by the side of Mr. Hawkshawe.

Though quite bewildered, her first impulse was to look out and see where she was; but nature seemed to be assisting the designs of the strange man in whose power she had so heedlessly placed herself; for, though it was evidently some time after daybreak, such a dense mist hung over the landscape, that it was impossible to distinguish objects a few feet from the carriage.

"Where are we?" was her first very natural question.

"We are in the famous old county of Cornwall," he replied; "we have two or three hours' drive before us, and then we shall be home just in time for breakfast. How pleasant it is to return home after an

absence, is it not?" he added, with a peculiar mocking laugh.

"Yes," said Ellen, with a deep sigh, "when there are those to greet us whose kind voices and familiar faces make the soul of home. When they are gone, the mere house is but the dead corpse of home. I could not bear to go into my father's house now—

‘Its echoes and its empty tread
Would sound like voices of the dead.’”

"I know those lines," said Mr. Hawkshawe; "where do they occur?"

"In Campbell's *Gertrude of Wyoming*," replied Ellen; and feeling more disposed to weep over her own isolated, homeless condition, than to enter into a discussion on the merits of the English poets, she leaned her head against the side of the carriage, and closed her eyes.

Her thoughts were sad and anxious enough. There had been a great deal of

haste in taking her from London; and though Mr. Hawkshawe had stated that imperative business called him into the country, there seemed no sufficient reason why, in these days of safe travelling, she should not have followed him the next morning, and had daylight for her journey. There was also a degree of mystery about the place of her destination. He had not, it is true, refused to tell her where she was going; but he had given evasive answers, mentioning no well-known locality, but only the names of obscure villages, from which she could collect nothing definite, and also by travelling in a separate carriage had rendered it impossible for her to follow up her questionings. She was too innocent and inexperienced to imagine any intended wrong from all this; but Mrs. Mason's hastily uttered expressions of fear, scarcely heeded at the time, had recurred incessantly to her memory, and roused very

uncomfortable doubts as to her own prudence in concluding such a hasty engagement, and Mr. Hawkshawe's perfect integrity of purpose in urging her to so prompt a departure, and binding her by a written agreement.

However, she was conscious, under her gentle and feminine exterior, of possessing a brave heart, and an unusual endowment of bodily strength and activity; and this, with a firm but not supine faith in a protecting Power above, inspired her with a full confidence that, whatever might happen, she should come off safe at last.

Ellen looked out of the carriage window, and tried to distinguish somewhat of the scenes through which they were passing. There was a vague, hoarse roaring, mingled with the rumbling of the carriage, and now and then she could dimly make out what seemed to be a crag or cliff looming through the fog, which convinced her that they were close to the sea. Presently the mist

began partially to roll away in great cloud-like masses, giving her short glimpses of such wild and rugged scenery as made her heart bound with joy at the idea of being free to ramble at will, and explore those romantic heights and gloomy recesses. Though brought up in a quiet, pastoral county, she had a great love for wilder and more rugged landscapes, and the savage nature of the views she partially obtained exceeded everything she had ever beheld in reality or painting. She hoped therefore that their journey would not be continued so far as to place this desolate region beyond a practicable walking distance from her future abode.

Her wish was speedily gratified, for a little further on the carriage suddenly passed under an ancient gateway of ivy-covered stone, leading into a spacious courtyard, somewhat roughly paved, and surrounded by buildings. The side facing the

entrance was occupied by a lofty and very ancient dwelling-house, and all the rest of the quadrangle was filled with stables and domestic offices.

Two stupid-looking lads came out to take the horses, and a minute later an old man-servant, with a deeply furrowed face and white hair, opened a wicket in the ponderous house door, the two leaves of which were immediately afterwards thrown open by a couple of stout country girls.

"Let me welcome you to St. Osyth's Priory, Miss Maynard," said Mr. Hawkshawe, as he handed her across the threshold. "Oliver," he continued, addressing the old domestic, "see that the lady's trunks are removed carefully to her apartment. It is ready for her reception, of course?"

"Everything is done as you ordered, sir," replied Oliver.

"That is well," said Mr. Hawkshawe. "Is breakfast ready?"

"It will be served in five minutes, sir," was the reply.

"You will doubtless like to employ the interval in arranging your dress, Miss Maynard," said Mr. Hawkshawe. "If you will have the goodness to follow those young women, they will conduct you to your chamber."

The two stout girls had already, to Ellen's no small amazement, shouldered her two heaviest trunks, chatting to each other meanwhile in a strange jargon which she could hardly comprehend, and were marching away, with the greatest ease, through the large hall, and up a flight of broad stairs.

Ellen followed them. The stairs terminated in a corridor, running round the entrance hall, from which branched off many lofty passages, communicating with the wings and other parts of the house. Into one of these passages the Amazons turned, abating nothing of their speed, nor ceasing

to chatter in their outlandish dialect. When near the end they went into an apartment which, as they deposited their burdens in it, Ellen supposed was intended for her. It was spacious and lofty, and the furniture must in former days have been exceedingly handsome; but all was faded and old-fashioned, and though it could not be called exactly dilapidated, the room had a gloomy and desolate appearance.

“Are you sure you are right?” she asked of one of the girls. “Is this to be my bedroom?”

She could not tell whether they understood her or not, for they both together replied in their strange *patois*, which, for any intelligence it conveyed to her, might almost as well have been the vernacular of the Tonga Islands. Then smiling, and bobbing several profound curtseys, they went their way.

Ellen looked round. The clean white counterpane, toilet-cover, and towels, and the fresh water in the ewer, showed that preparations had been made for some one's reception; and although the room was magnificent in its proportions, yet, after all, the furniture was by no means so splendid as to make it unlikely that it might be intended for the use of the governess.

In a few minutes the two girls returned with her guitar case, and smaller luggage, again went through the ceremony of smiling and bobbing, and left her to herself.

After having glanced round the room, Ellen's first impulse was to look out of the windows.

The house on that side was built upon the edge of a precipitous rock, probably for the sake of the natural defence it afforded in the old barbaric times, whence its first construction might be dated. A deep glen, that looked dark and gloomy even at that

morning hour, yawned beneath ; and amid the crags that strewed its bed, a rapid mountain-stream foamed and roared on its way to the sea, only half seen beneath the many twisted and gnarled old trees that clung to the fissures in the cliffs, seeming to hold on tenaciously by their naked and sinewy roots.

A little below the point at which the house was situated, the glen widened, giving a view of a small rock-bound bay, and beyond, of the wild expanse of the ocean.

Ellen was so entranced by this scene that it was not till the sound of a gong echoed through the vaulted passages, that she recollected that she had to arrange her dress for breakfast. To wash her face and hands, smooth the dark braids of her glossy hair, and generally "settle" her dress, was the work of so short a time, that when one of the girls returned to marshal her to the breakfast-room, she was ready to follow her.

The apartment to which Ellen was introduced corresponded in size, in antiquity, and in gloominess, with what she had already seen of the mansion. The table was covered with a plentiful repast, and a great deal of massive, antiquated plate; but what chiefly attracted the young stranger's attention was the company already seated at the board.

Mr. Hawkshawe, with a shade more gloom upon his brow, sat at the head, and on either side of him was placed a lady. It needed but one look to see that she who sat at his right hand must be his mother, so exactly did her features resemble his. She was evidently very old, and her once tall figure was nearly doubled; but her spirit was as strong, and her mind as active as ever. There was more vindictiveness expressed in her face than in her son's; there was more unbending will about the compressed lips; there was more fierceness

and penetration in the eyes; in short, she looked like Mr. Hawkshawe converted into a mummy, and possessed by a demon.

The other lady was a woman of a doubtful age; she might be anything between thirty and forty-five; but on another point there was no doubt,—she was insane. A grave-looking, elderly woman stood behind her chair, and directed and controlled all her movements. The poor creature did not utter a word, but quietly obeyed the whispered orders of her keeper. She had one habit, however, which from its wearisome iteration became extremely distressing. She would raise her eyes furtively, by little jerks as though they were climbing steps, till they rested on the countenance of the old lady, when her face would assume an expression of such fear as it seemed impossible she could feel without screaming aloud; but nevertheless she uttered no sound, and the old

lady's eyes being always on the alert, quickly detected the scrutiny, and those of the poor lunatic sank under the sharp gaze, only to begin again painfully climbing their imaginary ladder.

As Ellen approached this singular group Mr. Hawkshawe rose and said, "Mother, this is Miss Maynard—Lady Clarissa Hawkshawe. It is needless," he added to Ellen, "to go through any form of presentation to my unfortunate wife, as she is incapable of noticing anything."

"Oh! the new governess!" said the old lady, with a sardonic laugh; "you may be seated."

Ellen had no relish for impertinence, but she could make great allowance for the vagaries of old age; so she curtsied to the venerable dame, and took the chair that had been placed for her next to the younger lady. She had hoped to see the boy who was to be her pupil, and upon whose dispo-

sition so much of her future comfort depended; but he did not make his appearance, and she commenced her cheerless meal.

Breakfast passed almost in silence; but at the very first word which she spoke, in reply to some question addressed to her by the master of the house, Mrs. Hawkshawe turned and looked at her eagerly. Then her eyes crept back to those of Lady Clarissa, and fell again into their usual monotonous exercise.

As Ellen sat there with that evil-eyed old woman before her, and the poor lunatic by her side, she recalled, with a feeling of compassion, the tone of bitterness with which Mr. Hawkshawe had spoken of the pleasure of returning home; and she also thought she saw a sufficient reason for his wishing to bind her to remain in that dismal abode long enough to be of some service to the neglected child, if not to become reconciled by habit to remaining there altogether.

She pictured that child to herself: a pale boy of nine or ten years old, with his mother's mild blue eyes and delicate features; slightly affected perhaps by that fearful malady under which her mind had sunk. And what a home was that for such a child! His mother's insanity, his father's stern melancholy, and above all his grandmother's malignity, composed an atmosphere in which such a young soul must be blighted.

Her fertile imagination soon worked itself into a state of enthusiasm about the delicate little object of her cares, towards whom she inwardly resolved to fill the place of his poor imbecile mother; and when the meal was ended, and Mr. Hawkshawe invited her to accompany him to the study, she rose willingly, notwithstanding Lady Clarissa's malignant chuckling addition of "Ay, ay, Miss Maynard, go to your dear little pupil! He! he! he! You'll

find him a sweet docile child, I promise you!"

Ellen curtsied to the dowager, and as she passed she cast a look of profound compassion on the poor lunatic, who returned it with a gaze of childish wonder, and with a sudden impulse caught her hand, and pressed it to her heart.

"Keep quiet, or I shall lock you up," said the keeper, in a low, stern voice, and the poor creature, trembling with fear, dropped Ellen's hand, and her eyes returned to their old exercise of creeping up to the face of her mother-in-law.

Ellen did not like to mention so delicate a subject to Mr. Hawkshawe at this early stage of her abode in his family, but she felt certain that she could do more towards restoring that poor lady's reason than the authoritative and coercive nurse.

As she followed the master of the house down one of the long passages, he suddenly turned and addressed her.

"You must not take fright at the sight of your pupil, Miss Maynard," he said, with an air of embarrassment, though he endeavoured to speak freely; "I warned you that his education had been terribly neglected."

"Is he—is he—afflicted—mentally?" she asked, shrinking back, more alarmed by Mr. Hawkshawe's manner than his words.

"No, no—he is not insane," replied Mr. Hawkshawe, "though his temper is very violent at times. He is merely somewhat older, and much taller than lads usually are when placed under female tutelage."

"Then why not have a tutor for him?" asked Ellen.

"I have tried that, and failed," replied Mr. Hawkshawe. "He is impatient of authoritative restraint, but he is easily led, especially by the power of music—which is, indeed, the master passion of his soul."

You may bend him to your will by means of music. It would be difficult," he added, with an attempt at a laugh, "to find a doctor of divinity who either could or would blend melody and mathematics so dexterously that the pupil would imbibe the one unconsciously, while eagerly swallowing the other, just as you give a child a powder in a spoonful of jam."

"Mathematics!" repeated Ellen, still drawing back,—“I fear you have misunderstood me, sir. I cannot teach mathematics."

"I do not expect it, my dear young lady," said he, "I merely named mathematics as the most natural adjunct of an LL.D. So pluck up your courage, and come along."

Ellen felt a strange inclination to run away, and recalled uneasily the sneering remarks of Lady Clarissa.

"You have not yet told me what you

wish me to teach your son," said she, in order to gain a few moments' delay.

"That is told in two words," replied Mr. Hawkshawe, drawing her arm within his own, and moving onwards;—"you may teach him what you like, and what you can. You will find that you must begin from the very commencement, for he cannot even read or write."

"He must be a mere child, then, after all," thought Ellen; and she went on with recovered confidence.

She soon found herself in a large, airy room, which bore strong evidence, in its furniture and decorations, of having been modernized, so as to render it as cheerful as possible. The windows had been enlarged, and opened to the ground, so that by descending two broad steps, access was gained to a terrace walk, at each end of which a flight of steps led to a secluded lawn and flower-garden, so well sheltered

from the sea-breeze by a curtain of cliffs, that all sorts of flowers bloomed there in perfection. The rock was nearly hidden from sight by a belt of tall trees, and the whole scene was so peaceful and lovely as it lay basking in the rays of the sun, now shining forth gloriously, that it looked like a little Eden.

CHAPTER VI.

AN ASTONISHING PUPIL.

ELLEN had barely time, as she passed the windows, to catch a glimpse of the beautiful scenery I have described, for her attention was speedily riveted upon the single occupant of the apartment.

This was a young man who, she was certain, must be much over twenty years old, though every care had been taken to give him an appearance of juvenility. He was closely shaven, but the strong black stubble showed that his beard and whiskers would have grown thick, if allowed. His hair was long and curly, but it was in vain to

attempt, by its careful management, to give an air of effeminacy to that muscular neck; and as vain was it to endeavour, by the boyish holland blouse with its falling collar, to conceal the herculean proportions of those broad shoulders, and six foot of stature.

His face was wonderfully handsome, but—though his forehead was broad and high—singularly wanting in intellect. He bore a strong resemblance to his father, though with many points of improvement. The eyes were better set, thus escaping the bird-of-prey like look which had struck her so forcibly on the first sight of Mr. Hawkshawe; his nose was less prominently aquiline, and his lips were fuller and more curved. He was reclining on a sofa near the farthest window, and his sole occupation was that of caressing a large dog, on which his eyes were fixed, with hardly so much intelligence in them as beamed from

those of the noble animal as he returned his master's gaze.

"Where is your son, sir?" said Ellen, stopping and trembling.

"There," replied Mr. Hawkshawe, pointing towards the young man.

"You have deceived me," she said, in a firm, low tone, though she still trembled; "it is not proper that I should become the teacher of that young man. He is older than I am."

"No, no—you are mistaken," said Mr. Hawkshawe, soothingly; "his appearance is deceptive. I cannot tell his age to a day, but in mind he is a mere child, I assure you."

"You must engage another teacher for him, sir—I cannot undertake the office," said Ellen. "I have been brought here under a delusion. You should have been more explicit with me."

Mr. Hawkshawe's eyes flashed angrily,

and his lips were compressed, and his breath came hard through his distended nostrils; but he controlled his feelings, and said calmly, "You seem to forget the terms of our agreement, Miss Maynard."

"No, sir, I have not forgotten the agreement," replied Ellen; "but I am certain that no magistrate would hold it to be binding."

"How if I should refuse you the opportunity of testing that point?" said Mr. Hawkshawe, through his clenched teeth, while his black brows were ominously knitted together.

"Do you mean to say that I am a prisoner?" asked Ellen, faintly, as she staggered and caught at a chair for support.

"Not if you act honourably, and keep to your engagement," he replied.

"I am not bound in honour to fulfil a promise which was obtained from me by fraud," said Ellen.

"Then you shall be bound by some other means," said Mr. Hawkshawe, looking even more fierce than before. "I tell you, Miss Maynard, I am not a man to be trifled with. Every hope for the future—all that renders the present worth living for—the blighted happiness which forms my sole memory of the past—all hang around that unhappy boy. Womanly tact, aided by the powers of music, *may* rouse him from his mental lethargy, and incite his mind to study. Nothing else has any power over him."

"Then why not employ a woman whose age would be a protection to her?" inquired Ellen.

"Impossible," was the reply, "his hatred of his grandmother is so intense, that an elderly woman would be in danger of her life, if she attempted to thwart or control him."

"I see it all now," said Ellen, as she recalled several incidents connected with

her intercourse with Mr. Hawkshawe; "you sought me out partly because I was a musician, but most because I was an orphan and friendless. But you are mistaken, sir," she added, raising her eyes and clasped hands to heaven, "I have still one Friend left to whom I never appealed in vain in time of trouble, and who will not forsake me now, if I remain true to myself."

"Miss Maynard," said Mr. Hawkshawe, solemnly, "have some compassion on the sufferings of a most unhappy father! I tell you again, that boy is the only hope—the only prop of my house. All my other sons have died, just as they gave promise of being all that my heart could wish, and he alone is left to me. *You* can rescue him from the state of mental darkness in which he lives; and will you refuse the sacred office? You ought rather to rejoice at being made the instrument for so divine a work. You ought to look upon it as a holy duty——"

"Pardon me, sir," interrupted Ellen, "you are scarcely qualified to point out the path of duty to others, when you must have greatly failed in your own parental duties before your son could fall into this state."

"Do not judge too hastily," said Mr. Hawkshawe; "it was not my doing. He was stolen when quite an infant, and brought up like a beast, scarcely even learning to speak. Consider well what you have to decide upon. The enlightenment of a human soul in this world, and his welfare in the next, depend upon your exertions. Look at him, as he lies there, caressing his dog. That creature is the only thing he loves, but the existence of that one affection proves that the social feelings are capable of cultivation."

"Why do you not undertake the task yourself?" inquired Ellen.

"He does not love me," replied the father,

sadly; "and besides, I have not the tact and patience requisite for such a task. His teacher *must* be a woman, and a woman with all her fine sensibilities fresh about her;—one who has not been soured by the world; one who has not forgotten the time when she was herself ignorant and foolish; one who will point out his errors without ridiculing them; and lead him to desire improvement, without inflicting on him, by her pedantry, the mortification of conscious ignorance. Such a teacher *must* be a woman, and a young one. Miss Maynard, I have built my hopes on you! Do not annihilate them! There is nothing which you can ask, and I perform, that shall be refused to you, if you succeed in awakening his slumbering mind; and you *will* succeed, if you try in right good earnest."

Ellen's resolution had been wavering for some minutes. Mr. Hawkshawe pressed

his lips upon her hand, and turned hastily aside. A large tear had fallen upon it. That tear gained the victory.

"I will try," she said, "but you must deal fairly with me; and if after a sufficient trial I fail to rouse his attention, or make any favourable impression on him, you must release me."

"I will, but on that condition only," said Mr. Hawkshawe, who had started round in delighted amazement at the sudden change, and was gazing on her with rapture; "and you must not plead trivial difficulties as a reason for abandoning your post."

"I think, sir, you would hardly hesitate to sacrifice my life itself to the accomplishment of your object!" said Ellen, with a half-scornful smile.

"You are right," he replied, earnestly; "but I would also sacrifice myself and half mankind to secure to that boy his natural and social rights. Nevertheless, you shall

be taken good care of, and your work made as easy as possible. See there, now! he has taken no notice of either of us. He is in one of his sullen moods."

"Is he deaf?" asked Ellen.

"No," replied Mr. Hawkshawe. "All his senses are wonderfully acute. He hears us, but whether he understands our conversation is another question."

Apparently the young man understood enough to comprehend that they were speaking about him, for, with a sullen scowl at his father, he arose and walked towards the door.

"Reginald," said Mr. Hawkshawe, mildly. But the young savage paid no attention to him. "Try the effect of music!" he whispered hastily to Ellen.

She sat down to the grand piano which stood open, and played the first piece that occurred to her recollection. It was one of Chopin's strange mysterious *Nocturnes*, and

nothing could have been better chosen. At the first note young Reginald stopped, and turned. With slow steps he advanced towards the piano. He stood by Ellen's side ; he watched her hands as with a firm and brilliant touch they danced along the keys. From the hands his eyes wandered up the rounded arms, just visible through the crape sleeves ; then up to her face, where the music seemed to be interpreted to another sense, so deeply did she feel every note she played.

Mr. Hawkshawe, as he watched him, might have exclaimed with *Prospero*, "It goes on as my soul prompts!"

When the music ceased, the young man drew a chair to Ellen's side, and said in a deep tone, and with what sounded almost like a foreign accent, "Go on—I want more."

She turned her head with an air of dignity, and looked him in the face. There was no girlish timidity, no shrinking in her

gaze. She had once awed an infuriated bull into quiescence by the power of her steadfast eyes, and she now summoned up somewhat of the same expression, and she saw that he was mastered.

"I will play to you again soon," she said; "but now there is something else to be done. There are many things that you must learn; and when you do well I will play to you. But if you displease me I will lock up the piano, and you shall have no more music."

"I *will* have music!" he exclaimed, his eyes flashing, and his clenched fist in unpleasant proximity to her head; "play more *now*—I *will* have it!"

"Would you dare to strike me?" she said, in a low, calm tone; "if you do so, I will go away, and never come back again."

"Don't go away—I will not beat you," said he, "but play to me. I should like to hear your music always."

"That would do you no good," she replied, "you must learn something besides; and I will teach you music when you have learnt other things that will be more useful to you."

"I don't want to learn anything else," he replied, sullenly; "I don't like anything but music;—and Hector," he added, patting the head of his dog, which had jumped on him to attract his notice; "I like Hector."

"Hector is doubtless a noble creature," said the young monitress, "but you would find a much greater pleasure in the companionship of young—young—in the companionship of youths of your own age, provided you knew as much as all boys are taught now-a-days. I can teach you quite enough to make you wish to know more, and then learning will be a pleasure to you."

"I shall never like learning, and I never will learn," said Reginald, doggedly.

"But consider what a disgrace it will be for a young man of property not to be able to read and write!" said Ellen.

"I don't care," he exclaimed, with a careless laugh, "the disgrace is my father's, not mine."

"But the injury falls upon you," said Ellen.

The words, however, were scarcely uttered, ere she repented of having spoken them, such a fearful storm of rage and hatred did they arouse in the young man's breast. His eyes flashed, his teeth and hands were clenched, and his fast-drawn breath whistled through his dilated nostrils.

"I know it—I know it!" he said at length, in a deep hollow whisper; "and I'll have my revenge!"

"It would be wiser to remedy the mischief, for that would be to your own benefit," said Ellen, quietly; "and you should remember, too, that you are not the only one who

suffers from your neglected education. How deeply your father is grieved by it!"

"Then why did he drive my mother from his house, to live in the cavern by herself, and bring me up there like a dog?" he demanded, with an air so ferocious that she was almost frightened.

"I know nothing of your family affairs," she replied, calmly; and turning to the piano she played a simple and touching melody. In a moment all his ferocity had left him, and he stood soothed and passive.

"Now," said she, rising, "let us begin our studies; and Hector shall sit beside you. Such good friends should not be separated."

She placed her soft white hand caressingly upon the head of the huge dog, who wagged his tail, and, after looking for a moment intently at her, returned her salutation in a most unexpected and unwelcome fashion, by placing a forepaw upon each of

her shoulders, and covering her face by one sweep of his tongue. Young Reginald burst into a loud laugh of delight, as he placed his strong arm behind her to save her from falling; but Mr. Hawkshawe shrieked with alarm.

"Don't touch that brute!" he exclaimed.
"Reginald! beat him off! he will kill her!"

But Reginald did not attempt to check his favourite's unruly demonstrations of affection. He merely prevented the young lady from being pushed down, and continued to laugh immoderately.

A change came over the spirit of Hector's emotions.

Mr. Hawkshawe's dread of the animal had yielded in some degree to his fears for Ellen's safety, and he advanced towards her, still calling out to Reginald to beat the dog off. This aroused all Hector's rage, and after showing his white fangs in one terrific snarl over Ellen's shoulder, he rushed past

her, and at the first onset threw Mr. Hawkshawe to the ground. Ellen's movements were scarcely less rapid than his own. She clasped her arms fearlessly round the neck of the fierce animal, but her strength was not sufficient to do more than embarrass his attack upon his prostrate foe.

"Help me! help me, Reginald!" she cried; but Reginald seemed in no hurry to comply. He rather enjoyed the mortal fear that was depicted on his father's contorted features, while he admired the intrepidity with which that young girl interposed her own slight form between the enraged brute and his prey.

At last, seeing that she was nearly exhausted by the violence of her efforts, he called the dog away, and Ellen rose from her crouching position so agitated that she could scarcely stand.

Had she had no one but herself to think of she would probably have fainted; but

there was a fresh demand upon her energies, and she put off her faintness—as some women can in such emergencies—steadied her nerves by an effort of the will, and instantly recovered her self-possession.

The moment he was relieved from the combined weight of his assailant and his young protectress, Mr. Hawkshawe sprang to his feet, livid with anger, and snatching down a rifle that hung on the wall, hastily examined the priming, and took aim at Hector. Ellen ran towards him.

“If you shoot that dog,” she exclaimed, in a low but energetic voice, “you will defeat your own wishes! Your son cares for but two things, and this creature is one of them. The dog has taken a liking to me, and through him I may obtain an influence over his master’s mind. If you would not render all my efforts useless, restrain your anger now.”

Mr. Hawkshawe lowered the rifle—looked

at his son—then at Ellen, and suffered the latter to take the weapon from his hands.

“I will spare the brute this once, but never again,” he said, as he turned on his heel, and quitted the room.

“You are a nice girl. I like you, and so does Hector,” said Reginald, coming familiarly up to her, and taking her hand. “Now that the old fellow is gone, come and play to me again.”

Ellen was greatly shocked to hear him speak so disrespectfully of his father; but as she knew that his mind was not fitted to receive either reproof or remonstrance, she wisely refrained from uttering either. Knowing also that it would not do for her to exhibit the slightest shade of timidity or fear, she adroitly converted his too familiar clasp of the hand into her own act, and led him with mild authority to the table, where she instantly commenced giving him his first lesson.

It would have been a ludicrous sight to see that stalwart young fellow conning his A B C like a little boy at a dame school; and Ellen avoided this by means of a variety of ingenious contrivances. The most efficacious of these was reading aloud while he followed the words with his eyes, and thus became accustomed to associate the combinations of the printed letters with the spoken sounds.

However, I have no intention of writing a treatise upon education. It is sufficient to say that Ellen, when she had once succeeded in fixing young Reginald's attention, found his perceptions rapid, and his intellect vigorous; and that in rendering her instructions as easy and attractive as possible, she discovered a fund of pleasurable interest in her task, which she had not anticipated.

CHAPTER VII.

AN UNNATURAL COMBAT.

WHILE Ellen and Reginald were still at their studies, the sound of a gong reverberated through the stone passages, and a few minutes afterwards the old servant, Oliver, entered, and announced to Ellen that dinner would be on the table in half an hour.

"Will you have the kindness to direct me to my room?" said she. "I came through so many turnings, that it would take me half the day to find my way back without a guide."

"You went first to the breakfast-parlour, Miss," replied Oliver; "but the direct way from here to your apartment is quite easy

to find. If you will please to follow me, I will conduct you to it."

Within a few feet of the study-door he turned aside, and led her up a narrow winding staircase, lighted by loop-holes, which showed the enormous thickness of the ancient walls. But modern improvement had been busy here, as well as in the room where she had passed the morning. The rough walls were plastered and painted; the stone steps, worn hollow by the mail-clad heels of many a knight and soldier of the old times of chivalry, had been made level by wooden casings, and thickly carpeted; the loop-holes were glazed, each with a single pane of plate glass; and a silken cord supported by gilded hands, projecting from the wall, served instead of balusters.

"This tower seems very old," said Ellen, with great interest; "I wish that the modern improvements would permit me to see more of it."

"I believe, Miss, it's older than the Conquest," said Oliver, glad of an excuse for resting in the steep ascent; "you can see it in its original state above the first storey, Miss. Master only had it renovated as far as your bed-room. You see the varnish is hardly dry yet, but the smell will soon go off. The workmen had to work hard to get it finished, for they did not begin it till just about an hour or so before master set off to London to fetch you down."

"Indeed! They must have worked very hard," observed Ellen, taking care to betray no astonishment at what she heard, though it revealed to her very clearly that Mr. Hawkshawe had gone to town with the fixed resolution of engaging the "musical orphan" at any price.

"Ah! they knew it *must* be completed before they left off," resumed Oliver, "and the whole twelve who were here, carpenters, plasterers, glaziers, upholsterers and all,

would not have remained here till midnight—no, not if they'd been offered a hundred pounds a-piece."

"It is haunted then, I suppose?" inquired Ellen.

"Oh yes, Miss, so the foolish folk about here are fond of saying. You see it's the rats, miss," said Oliver, argumentatively.

"At the foot of these stairs there is the door leading down to the dungeons of the old castle—perhaps you remarked it, miss—a little arched door in the dark recess to the left as you come up?"

"I saw the recess, but not the door; it was too dark," replied Ellen, as the old man paused for a response.

"The door is there, miss," continued Oliver, "and it's natural to suppose there must be numbers of rats among the old dungeons, and then when they get out and run about the stairs, and make a noise, people who have not the sense

to know better think the place is haunted."

"I wish *I* could believe so," said Ellen, with a slight shudder, "for I have a great dislike to rats, and no fear of ghosts."

Oliver gave a wistful look at her, and continued his way up the turret stairs.

Ellen found that the first landing communicated by a low arched doorway with the corridor in which her bed-room was situated, thus giving her a short and easy means of transit between her sleeping-apartment and the study. The old man threw open the door, bowed her in with the grace of a courtier of the olden time, closed it after her, and she found herself again in her room with its quaint antique furniture, and rugged prospect.

The idea that she was to sit during dinner under the eyes of that horrible old Lady Clarissa induced Ellen to bestow considerable care upon her dress. This was, of

course, black; but it set off her tall figure; and pale melancholy face, to the greatest advantage.

The second summons to dinner had scarcely ceased to echo through the house when she descended the stairs.

In the hall she met Mr. Hawkshawe, coming, he said, to escort her through the labyrinth.

Dinner was served in a sumptuous though old-fashioned style, in a room still larger than the one where they had breakfasted; and, from the size of the table, and the quantity of plate with which it was loaded, Ellen expected to see several guests. None however appeared, and she felt herself one of a very ghastly company, as she sat down with that hideous old woman, that stern, unhappy-looking man, and the poor maniac.

But little conversation passed at table. The master of the house was gloomy and

taciturn, Lady Clarissa was crabbed and snappish, and Mrs. Hawkshawe only whispered occasionally to her attendant.

Ellen too was silent; not from any sense of awe at being in the presence of her "superiors," for the idea had not once crossed her mind that any one would suppose them to be such;—not from being surrounded by unusual splendour, for she had been accustomed to quite as much elegance, though with less formality, at her father's table; but from the sadness of her own thoughts, and the oppressive dulness that reigned around her.

She could not help contrasting the home of former years—with its comfort, its enlivening converse round the social board, where wit, though abundant, never outraged sense; and conviviality, though under no visible restraint, never trespassed on sobriety;—with the abode where she now found herself, with its frigid state, its grandeur with-

out gracefulness, and its profusion without comfort.

So the day passed on ; and many more succeeded it, till the days grew into weeks, and the weeks into months, without any occurrence worth recording.

Lady Clarissa, whenever the governess seated herself at table, directed a searching look upon her costume ; and on one occasion, so little did Ellen's dress of rich moire antique suit the old lady's notions of what was fitting and proper, that to it might probably be attributable the more than customary ill-humour which marked her conduct.

Two or three glasses of wine, instead of warming her heart, loosened and sharpened her tongue.

"Did you see those two girls, this morning, with their new fly-away caps stuck all over with artificial flowers?" said Lady Clarissa, addressing her son.

"I saw that they looked very smart," he

replied, "but I did not observe that the improvement was caused by an alteration in their caps."

"*Improvement!*" exclaimed the old lady, angrily, "I wonder what next you'll call an improvement! But I pretty quickly sent their finery to the back of the fire."

"I am sorry to hear that, mother," said Mr. Hawkshawe, "for such an interference was both arbitrary and unnecessary. As long as servants dress in a manner that is suited to their station, it is a wanton infringement of their rights to prevent their indulging in a little harmless decoration."

"It is *not* suited to the station of a servant to dress herself out in silks and flowers," said Lady Clarissa, with a spiteful glance at Ellen; "but there's no knowing where your revolutionary notions may lead to, when you can bring a menial, and seat her at the same table with your mother."

Ellen started, and half rose from her

chair, while the indignant blood rushed to her face, and her eyes flashed; but reflection came almost as rapidly as resentment, and she re-seated herself with an air of calm self-possession that conveyed a better reproof to the old lady's rudeness than any remonstrance could have done.

Mr. Hawkshawe also started up, but so much more brusquely that he knocked over his chair. Lady Clarissa chuckled malignantly at this exhibition of his wrath, for it was an agreeable excitement to her to put him in a rage; he disappointed her, however, for taking the cue from Ellen, on whom he cast a glance of profound admiration, he too resumed his seat in silence, and in the next moment refilled his mother's glass with a perfectly steady hand.

"Ugh! so *you* take lessons, too, I see," muttered the spiteful old woman, "and a very quick scholar you are, that I must say."

She went on muttering to herself, and Mr. Hawkshawe had the tact to hasten the uncomfortable meal to a close, and the good feeling to draw no more of his mother's animadversions upon Ellen by paying her greater attention than was absolutely requisite, confining himself strictly to the barest civilities of the table, but bowing her out with marked deference when she retired.

Ellen with difficulty repressed the tears that were almost choking her, as she hurried to the study. It was unoccupied; and with a sudden feeling of release from the painful restraint that had bound her, she threw herself into a chair and gave way to a passionate fit of weeping.

The low, troubled whining of a dog aroused her, and Hector laid his head upon her shoulder, while at the same moment Reginald pulled her hands from her face, and looked at her swollen eyes with anxiety and alarm.

"Who has done this?" he asked, in a hoarse, savage whisper. "Is it my father?"

"No, no," replied Ellen, hurriedly, for the lurking vengeance in his eyes alarmed her; "your father is all that is good and kind."

"Then it is that wicked old hag!" he muttered; "dry your eyes, dear, and don't cry any more. She shall not do it again. I'll go and talk to her about it."

There was nothing alarming in these words, but uttered as they were through his closed teeth, while his face was pale with rage, they recalled what Mr. Hawkshawe had said of Lady Clarissa's life being in danger from the violent hatred which his son bore towards her.

"I did not say it was your grandmother who had made me weep," said Ellen; "and even if it were, you must not harm her. She is very old, and should therefore be treated with respect."

"Yes, she is very old," returned Reginald; "but she is very wicked too, and everybody will be happier when she is dead."

"You must not harm her!" cried Ellen, catching him by the arm as he moved towards the place where his rifle was hanging; "do you not know that it is very sinful to take a human life?"

"It is not sinful to take hers," he replied, calmly; "and so you would say if you knew—*what I won't tell you*. I care no more for shooting her than for shooting an old carrion-crow."

"But if you killed her it would be murder, and you would be hanged for it," urged Ellen, horrified at the callousness with which he contemplated so dreadful a deed.

"Oh, no!" he exclaimed, with a derisive laugh, "people are not hanged for murder in this house!"

"Not in this *house*, perhaps," said Ellen,

"but you would be taken away to a prison, and then hanged with thousands of people looking at you."

"I tell you, if any one in this house could be hanged for murder, *she* would have been hanged long ago!"

"Reginald!" said a deep voice, interrupting him in a tone of grave reproof.

Both turned, and saw Mr. Hawkshawe, who had followed to apologise to Ellen as soon as he could do so without exciting his mother's irascible temper and insolent remarks.

"Sir, I must leave your house immediately!" cried Ellen, forgetting all but Lady Clarissa's insults.

"No, you must not," he replied, taking her hand with an air of great kindness; "I trust you feel convinced how deeply I regret the annoyance to which you have been subjected. I give you my word that it shall never occur again. You shall take all your

meals with Reginald, and it will be your own fault if you ever again meet Lady Clarissa."

"I cannot stay," said Ellen, choking with resentful tears.

"Do you reflect upon what may be the consequence if you let her drive you away?" he demanded, with a glance towards the rifle. Ellen shuddered.

"If you *do* go away," said young Reginald, comprehending his father's hint, "I will shoot her, or kill her in some other way; but if you promise to stay, I will leave her alone."

"But it is not only on account of Lady Clarissa that I wish to go," said Ellen; "I am much too young to be your teacher, Reginald. If you had had more experience you would know that by remaining here with you I shall suffer greatly in the opinion of the world."

"Hang the world!" exclaimed Reginald,

impetuously; "I don't care for the world, and why should you care for it? Now, attend to what I say. And mind! I am a man, and I have strength and courage to do what I resolve to do, for I am not a peevish child, as my father wanted you to believe. I love you, and I will learn anything you like to teach me, and I will do whatever I can to please you, and make you happy, if you will stay. But if you go"——

He paused and drew a long breath, while his magnificent eyes were fixed on her with an expression that made her tremble. "If you go," he continued, in a terrible whisper, "I will burn the house down, and die among the ruins."

"This is a vain threat in your father's presence," said Ellen; "he has power to put you under restraint, and prevent such an act of guilty madness."

"Ask him if he has!" cried Reginald, exultingly.

"Ask me nothing, Miss Maynard," said Mr. Hawkshawe, as she turned an anxious frightened glance towards him, "and take nothing for granted as being possible or impossible. I entreat you to give heed to what Reginald has said, that he will learn from you willingly. And if that has no influence over you, I beg you to recollect the terms of your written agreement to remain as teacher to my son for one year. There is no mention of his age, so you cannot get free on that ground."

"No—it is impossible! I cannot remain!" cried Ellen, after a brief struggle with herself.

Those words to the wild soul of Reginald were like the spark that explodes a mine. At a bound he seized upon the loaded rifle, aimed it at Ellen's heart, and fired.

She fell to the ground with a faint cry, that seemed to be strangely echoed from the passage outside. After wounding her

in the arm, the ball had passed through the door.

“Murderer! villain!” shouted Mr. Hawkshawe, springing like an enraged panther upon his son, and clutching him by the throat.

Reginald dropped the gun and defended himself.

Well was it for Mr. Hawkshawe that Hector was not in the room, or the struggle would have been speedily decided against him. As it was, though he had the advantage of the first onset, and Reginald was bewildered and horror-stricken at the effect of his own mad action, he was by no means a match for the young savage. But before it could be decided by the strength of either party, the unnatural combat was interrupted by the innocent cause of it.

As she lay on the ground Ellen's consciousness began to return. At first she heard the sound of trampling feet, mixed with fierce though smothered imprecations.

She opened her eyes languidly, and to her horror beheld the father and son engaged in a mortal struggle. That sight recalled her senses in a moment. She rose up, not knowing that the blood was flowing fast from a wound in her arm, and tried to detach the young man's parricidal hands from his father's throat. Her strength alone could not have accomplished this, but her mere touch acted like magic. Reginald's arms dropped by his sides, but only to be raised again, and clasped round her in wild delight.

"I have not killed her!" he exclaimed; "I have not killed her! Forgive me! Will you forgive me? I did not mean to hurt you. I did not know what I was doing! Will you promise not to go away?"

"You take a strange means of making me stay," said Ellen, gently disengaging herself from his embrace; "but I will stay on one condition."

"What—what?" he demanded, eagerly.

"That you kneel and ask your father's forgiveness for having raised your hand against him," said Ellen.

"He struck me first," said Reginald, sullenly.

"That is no excuse," said Ellen; "for he is your father; and no act of his can justify you in striking him. Besides, think of the provocation."

"What was that to him?" said Reginald, turning pale with jealousy; "does he love you so much that he would kill his son for your sake?"

"He is responsible for my safety," she replied, "for he must have known that it was almost as dangerous to bring me here as to put me into the cage of an untamed lion. Nevertheless, I will brave the danger and stay with you, in the hope of making you a better——" she hesitated, not liking to acknowledge him to be a man, while to call him a boy would have been perfectly

ludicrous ; so she changed the form of her sentence, and added hastily, " of making you better, if you will apologize to your father, and give me your sacred promise never again, under whatever provocation, to lift your hand against him."

Reginald looked down. He was evidently moved by what she said, when a loud rap against the panel of the half-open door caused him to start, and the old fierce look came over his face.

"No," he said, through his clenched teeth, "I will not promise!"

"Reginald, I am hurt!" said Ellen, in a tremulous voice ; "I feel very faint. Perhaps even yet I may die. But before my wound is seen to, I must hear you ask your father's pardon, and promise—and promise——"

Her voice faltered ; she was nearly fainting.

Reginald cast a frightened glance upon

her, and threw himself at the feet of Mr. Hawkshawe, who had sunk upon a chair when his son released him, and was slowly recovering from the effects of partial strangulation.

“Father!” he cried, “I beg your forgiveness! And I swear by her blood,” and he held up his hand, which had come in contact with her wounded arm, “never again to strike or injure you in any way, whatever you may do!”

Before Mr. Hawkshawe could distinctly comprehend what all this meant—for that his son should kneel to him for pardon added much to the general confusion of his senses, so improbable was it that such an event could be anything but the disordered imaginings of a weakened brain—Reginald had sprung again to his feet, and caught Ellen in his arms as she was falling.

“Father! father!” he shouted. “Call some one to help her! She will die—she will die!”

Mr. Hawkshawe staggered to the bell and rang it violently. Oliver, who had been alarmed by the report of the gun, answered the summons almost instantly, and when he rushed out again to call the housekeeper, according to his master's hurried orders, he encountered her at the door, for she too had been startled by the firing, and as she said, by a shrill scream that immediately followed it.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR, AND A TALE OF
HORROR.

ELLEN was laid upon the sofa, and Mr. Hawkshawe, Reginald, and Oliver retired, while Mrs. Sweetman, who possessed considerable skill in such matters, hastily examined the wound. The ball had passed through the arm, but fortunately without injuring bone or artery, though the wound bled profusely.

“She has fainted as much through fright as loss of blood,” said the housekeeper, surveying Ellen’s face more attentively than she had hitherto had leisure to do; “dear heart! but she’s a pretty creature! . Don’t

you think so, sir?" she added, addressing Mr. Hawkshawe, who, with the imperious Reginald, she had permitted to return as soon as the wound was dressed.

"Very," said Mr. Hawkshawe, laconically.

"Pretty!" repeated Reginald, in a tone of contempt. "Why you call Nancy pretty. Ellen is beautiful—she is magnificent! I must learn names to call her by. All those are too poor."

He said this in a low voice as he leant over the couch, so that he was not heard by the bystanders; but, as he concluded, Ellen opened her eyes and looked at him. She was still so faint that the idea of death was uppermost in her mind. She saw the benevolent face of the housekeeper beside her; and the figures of Mr. Hawkshawe and Oliver in the rear were multiplied by her uncertain vision into a crowd of strangers.

"He did not mean to kill me," said Ellen.
"I believe the gun went off by accident."

"You must not talk, Miss," said the housekeeper ; "drink this, and lie still."

Then turning to Mr. Hawkshawe, she added, "it will be best for her, sir, for everybody to leave the room but me. I'll stay by her."

Mr. Hawkshawe wished to stay, but could find no pretext for so doing. Oliver, of course, went without a word, excepting an assurance to Mrs. Sweetman that he would be on the alert to come at the gentlest ring of the bell.

Reginald, without troubling himself about excuses or pretexts, said flatly that he would not stir ; so, partly from the habit of giving way to his moods, and partly from dread of an altercation which might alarm the invalid, he was suffered to remain.

Dark and tumultuous were the thoughts that chased each other through the chaotic mind of the young man, as he sat watching with steadfast eye the poor girl who had so

nearly fallen a victim to his blind passions. And he could do nothing to soothe her while she lay there. Much as he loved music he could not play to her; he could not read; he could not converse so as to entertain her. All the strong feelings—the tenderness—the contrition—the agony of remorse—that consumed his soul, he must keep within, for he could find no words to express them.

He looked at the stains of blood upon his hands, and then at Ellen's wan face, and groaned aloud. She heard the groan, and held out her hand to him. In a moment he was kneeling by her side.

"I see," she murmured, "that you sincerely regret what you have done. Profit by the lesson, and curb your hasty temper for the future. Above all, show more deference towards your father. Remember the commandment, 'Honour thy father and thy mother.'"

"It was easy for you to keep that com-

mandment," whispered Reginald, "for you have often told me how good and kind your father and mother always were to you. But mine!——"

"Repeat nothing to the discredit of your parents," interrupted Ellen; "*that* is not obeying the commandment. Your father, at least, is very kind to you."

"Oh yes, he is kind enough *now*," replied Reginald, carelessly; "but that is because all the others are gone. All his fine sons died, and then he was glad to take back the outcast. They all died," he continued, in a mysterious whisper, "after eating lozenges which their grandmother gave them. Just as they were growing up she became fond of them, and gave them lozenges; and then they died."

"Do not say such horrible things!" said Ellen. "Mrs. Sweetman said I must be quiet, and you are whispering insinuations dreadful enough to drive me into a fever."

"You may ask Mrs. Sweetman if it is not all true," he replied; "but I'll say no more about it. Do you really forgive me for firing at you? I did not know what I was doing; I only felt that I could not part from you, and that if I could not have you alive, I would have you dead."

"You were a reckless, hot-headed boy," said his monitress, trying to resume the tone of superiority with which she usually addressed him, and which, strange to say, she seemed to have lost when he shot her.

Reginald looked at a pier-glass that reflected his own figure, and that of his "governess;" and he smiled, as well he might.

Though on Ellen's first introduction, he was closely shaven, he had resolutely refused to perform that operation any more, and all the lower part of his face was consequently covered by a very thick, though short, black beard. His stature was almost gi-

gantic, and his shoulders were broad and muscular. His complexion, naturally very dark, was bronzed by exposure to the weather; for before the arrival of his gentle tutoress his principal occupation had been roaming about the hills and cliffs with his dogs and gun. Such was his own figure, as he saw it reflected in the glass.

Ellen, with her brown hair lying dishevelled upon the white pillow which had been brought for her accommodation, and pale from loss of blood, faintness, and agitation, looked very youthful and fragile. It was no wonder that Reginald smiled. She followed the direction of his eyes, and caught their glance of peculiar meaning.

"I will promise to be a good boy for the future," said he, in a tone of good-humoured mockery; "does not that," pointing to the glass, "look like the picture of a good little boy and his governess?"

"I know," said Ellen, reddening with

vexation, "that my position here is ridiculous, as well as annoying and dangerous; but it is not for you to remind me of it. If you hint at such a thing once more, I will not remain here a day longer."

"How!" said Reginald, with lowering brows; "have I not cured you of running away?"

"Say rather, have you not done your utmost to drive me away?" returned Ellen. "You seem to imagine that the same course of treatment which will subdue a horse or a dog may be adopted towards a rational being. But you will see your error if you persist in such conduct."

Here Mrs. Sweetman, who was sitting a little distance off, and by reason of a slight deafness had not heard a word of their conversation, which she wished for her patient's sake to interrupt, but dared not for fear of rousing Reginald's ungovernable temper, gave vent to her uneasiness in a suppressed

sigh, and "Oh dear! oh dear!" scarcely audible. Ellen, however, heard it, and taking the hint, said, "I am very weary, and I think I can sleep, if you will go away."

"I will be quiet," said Reginald, "but I cannot go away."

He returned gently to his chair. Ellen feigned sleep, until sleep really closed her eyelids.

The two watchers remained motionless. The hours stole away, and night settled down around them. Once or twice the door opened softly, and Mr. Hawkshawe looked in; but at a sign from the house-keeper he withdrew.

Late in the evening Ellen awoke much refreshed; the pain of the wound was considerably abated, and her mind had recovered from the excessive agitation under which she had suffered. Reginald, who had remained so silent and motionless that

Mrs. Sweetman imagined that he too had been asleep, was immediately in full activity, and so tormented the invalid with his well-meant but unskilful assiduities, that she was fain to retire to the quiet of her own chamber.

The kind old housekeeper offered to sit up all night, but to this Ellen would not consent. Nevertheless as she had good reason to believe that it was her hopeful pupil's intention to take up his post outside her door, she willingly agreed that the old lady should occupy a temporary bed on a large sofa which formed part of the furniture of her chamber.

Though she had taken a draught composed of various herbs of a sedative nature, it was many hours before Ellen felt inclined to sleep. All the events of the last few months presented themselves vividly before her mind. The death of her father and mother; every incident of the funerals; the

genuine kindness of Mr. Smedley, contrasting so favourably with the malicious triumph of those whose flatteries she had treated with contempt in the time of her prosperity. Then came the bitter recollection of Lady Willoughby's altered manner, and the heart-sickness of hope deferred, for not a word had she heard from Frank. It was strange too that she had not received an answer to either of the two letters that she had written to the good doctor; one immediately on her arrival at St. Osyth's Priory, and another two months later. Then she recalled Mr. Hawkshawe's evident anxiety to prevent her knowing precisely to what place he was taking her; and she did him no great injustice by the suspicion which flitted across her mind, that he might perhaps have detained and destroyed her letters. This it was quite possible for him to do, as the letter-bag was always taken to him to be locked before being dispatched to

the post-office. After dismissing the idea again and again, as quite unworthy of one who always behaved like a gentleman, she resolved to write once more to Mr. Smedley, detailing exactly how she was situated, and giving as accurate a description as she could of the most prominent features in the surrounding country, lest the address mentioned to her by Mr. Hawkshawe should not be sufficiently clear. This letter she intended to drop in the village the next time she went to church, in the hope that whoever found it would put it into the post-office, which she had been informed was near a mile farther, though in which direction she had never been able to discover, as the servants could only enlighten her by mentioning the names of places which she had never heard of, and Mr. Hawkshawe purposely kept her in the dark.

Why she intended giving such a precise description of her place of abode,

she did not give herself the trouble to consider. She could not suppose that Mr. Smedley would be knight-errant enough to leave his patients, and come there in search of her, and she *would* not suppose that he might impart the information to another, to whose soldierly character the knight-errantry would be quite suitable.

Having decided upon this matter for the future, Ellen began again to think of the past and the present. Mr. Hawkshawe's manners towards her had undergone a great, though gradual change. He had always been perfectly polite and deferential; but at first she had felt certain that he would have sacrificed her without hesitation, if he had deemed it necessary for the attainment of the grand object of his wishes, the training of his son, and fitting him to uphold the family honours. By slow degrees this impression wore off. His visits

to the study, which used to be paid in the morning, and chiefly in order that he might watch over Reginald's progress, were now left till the evening, and assumed the appearance of being made to the teacher, rather than to the pupil.

This seemed natural enough, considering his passionate love for music, and Ellen was glad of it, for Mr. Hawkshawe's presence acted as a check upon her unruly pupil, who sometimes manifested so much fondness for his tutoress that she had great difficulty in restraining him at all within the bounds of decorum. He was too ignorant of the world and its rules to understand why he should not hold her hand in his, or put his arm round her waist, or lay his head on her lap or shoulder, when it did not inflict any pain upon her, and was very pleasant to himself. Yet, though he would not acknowledge that there was any wrong in attempting such familiarities, an

innate modesty made him desist from them in the presence of a third party.

For this reason Ellen was pleased when Mr. Hawkshawe began to spend his evenings with them, although she attributed it to a suspicion on his part that the poor teacher had designs upon the hand and fortune of her wealthy pupil.

She smiled haughtily at the idea, and thought of Frank Willoughby.

After a while a feeling of jealousy began to develope itself between the father and son, and the attentions of the former became so marked, that Ellen often wished that she had only the unsophisticated and innocent Reginald to deal with.

She would have been contented to play to them all the evening, especially as, under the pretext that it made her nervous if any one looked over her, she had succeeded in establishing it as a rule that neither of them was to turn over the leaves

for her, but both were to remain at a sufficient distance.

But fond as they both were of music, it did not always suit them.

Mr. Hawkshawe was very fond of chess, and Ellen was a good player; consequently Reginald wished to learn, and sat close beside her to watch the game. This did well enough for a time, till lowering looks and angry words began to show that fresh jealousies were arising; and her position, as at once the cause of contention and the medium of peace, became more and more arduous and embarrassing. It was with great difficulty that she had kept her pupil and his father from an open rupture, and the catastrophe of that day was only the bursting of a storm that had long been threatening.

She wished very much that she could escape from her engagement; but the penalty, which she never dreamt of eluding

by any subtlety of the law, would have swallowed up nearly the whole of her worldly possessions. Another and stronger reason for remaining was that she had acquired considerable power over Reginald's mind, and was rapidly drawing him into a love of learning for its own sake, which would make him willing, after a time, to receive instruction from more fitting tutors.

On one subject alone his mind seemed incapable of receiving any impression. He could not, or would not, entertain a religious idea. Ellen often prayed fervently for strength and guidance to overcome this difficulty. She blamed herself for want of zeal in the work that had been appointed her of leading an erring and benighted soul into the way of salvation. And now, while she lay awake with the pain of her wound, she recalled many opportunities that she had omitted, when a word in season might have

been spoken; and almost believed that the danger she had incurred, and the wound she had received, were a direct punishment for her lukewarmness.

As she lay in a half-waking, half-dreaming state, she imagined that she saw a face looking steadfastly at her, through the partially-opened curtains. Probably the opiate which she had swallowed aided in some degree the slight delirium under which she laboured, and caused this delusion. There was a wood fire blazing brightly on the hearth, but the light was intercepted by the large sofa on which Mrs. Sweetman lay, as well as by the thick dark curtains of the bed, so that the side on which the face appeared was thrown into deep shadow. At first it struck her as bearing so strong a resemblance to Reginald that Ellen imagined that her pupil had stolen in to see if she were sleeping; but a sudden gleam of the flickering light showed

her that it was the countenance of a woman.

The complexion was swarthy—the eyes large, black, and lustrous, and the whole appearance was that of an extremely handsome gipsy; not young, yet preserving the beauty which in general disappears before middle age in that hardy race. As she gazed, the resemblance to Reginald became more and more striking, until she began to fancy that the apparition must be the mere “coinage of her brain,” which pertinaciously recalled the face of her pupil as she had seen him before his beard had grown. She passed her hand across her eyes to clear her vision, and when she looked again the space between the curtains was vacant. Satisfied that it was a mere optical delusion she tried to compose herself to sleep, when the sudden appearance of Mrs. Sweetman at the other side of the bed again aroused her.

“Is anything amiss?” asked Ellen.

"No, Miss," replied the old woman, "only I thought you were out of bed and moving about the room. I really thought I saw you, but I suppose hearing you move made me fancy that."

"I have not stirred," said Ellen; "perhaps it was a cat. Look round the room, will you, and send her out."

Mrs. Sweetman looked under the bed, and in every corner where a cat could by any possibility be concealed; and as nothing was discovered Ellen felt satisfied that no human intruder could have been in the room. As she wished to know whether the door was locked, and at the same time to avoid frightening the old lady, she suggested that the cat might have been scratching at the door. The peculiar click as the key turned in the lock convinced her that it had been secured; and therefore if her nocturnal visitant had been a creature of flesh and blood, she could not have made her exit in

the usual way. The housekeeper's exclamation as she looked into the passage also suggested an easy explanation of the noise which the old lady had heard.

"La! Master Reginald!" she said, "how you did frighten me!"

"Is Mr. Reginald there?" asked Ellen.

"Yes, Miss, lying across the door-way, as if he was asleep."

"I am not asleep," he said, in a low voice.

"Reginald! come here!" said Ellen, much to Mrs. Sweetman's astonishment, as well as to the startling of all her notions of propriety. The young man had no such ideas, but sprang across the room, and knelt by the bedside.

"Do you wish to make me very ill?" asked Ellen.

"You know I do not," he replied, in a hoarse whisper; "you know I would die to serve you, now that I am in my senses."

"Then go to your own room," said Ellen, "and pray for God's help that you may re-

pent sincerely of the crimes you have attempted to commit."

"I do repent," he said, taking her hand, and passing it across his face that she might feel the tears with which his cheeks and beard were wet.

"I do not doubt that you repent in your own rough way," said Ellen; "but such repentance is not sufficient before God. Go!" she said, and she fervently pressed his hand, for he had not suffered her to withdraw hers, "go and humble yourself at the Throne of Grace, and pray that this occasion, which might have ended so fatally for you, may be turned, by the help of Divine Wisdom, into the means of your salvation."

"This occasion, as you call it, might have been much worse for you than for me!" he said, with a shudder.

"Nay, not so," she replied, "for I am somewhat prepared, and should not fear to meet my Maker; but what would have

been your state, with the blood of a fellow-creature on your hands!—Perhaps even with your father's life to answer for!"

"That state should not have lasted long," he said, smiling grimly.

"Oh! worse and worse!" she cried, rightly divining his meaning. "What then would have been your fate, hurried by your own act into eternity!"

"Do all people who have committed murder go down to that bottomless pit you have told me of, and remain there for ever?" he asked.

"We are taught to believe that such will be their fate, unless they repent," replied Ellen.

"Then I don't wish to go there at all," said Reginald; "because I should always see my grandmother, for she will never repent. But as you are sure to go to Heaven, I should like to go there too. Tell me what I must do!"

Ellen sighed heavily, as she thought how unsuitable was such a state of mind for the momentous task which he undertook with so much levity.

"First," said she, "you must pray with all your heart and soul for Divine grace to assist you and enlighten you. Then you must learn God's commandments, and endeavour to keep them. I can talk no more, Reginald; I am weak and weary. Good night."

He kissed her hand, and went softly out of the room. In another minute the door of his own room was heard to shut; the sound reverberated through the vaulted passage, and all was still.

"I never saw any one so changed in all my born days as Mr. Reginald is since you've been here, Miss," said Mrs. Sweetman, turning the key and approaching the bed; "before you came his temper was awful!"

"I have good cause to know that it is still

rather ungovernable," said Ellen, glancing at her wounded arm. "How is it that his education has been so sadly neglected?"

"I hardly know the rights of the story, Miss," replied the housekeeper, "for I have not lived in the family much above six year. If there's anybody besides the family themselves that really does know, it is old Oliver; but he is so close one can get nothing out of him. What I have heard is as this: master married on the sly when he was very young, and he put his wife to school somewhere near London, because she was a foreigner, and had been taught very little. He said she was a foreigner, but many people that live about here, and saw her often, have told me that she was as like a gipsy as anybody could be. After a time he brought her home, and then it seems that her temper was that dreadful that he had a miserable life of it. However, she brought him a son, and that was a comfort

to him, and the child seemed to smooth her humours too, and so they got on very well for a few years. But then Lady Clarissa grew tired of living in Paris, and came to reside here. After that, there was no peace in the house for anybody. Her ladyship never goes into a passion nor quarrels herself, but she has the cleverest way of setting other people by the ears that ever I heard of. She never seems so pleased as when she has made two people disagree and quarrel, and it was easy enough to do it here; for master is hot-tempered, and Mrs. Hawkshawe, they say, had the spirit of Lucifer when she was roused. When Master Reginald was about four years old they had a terrible quarrel, and Mrs. Hawkshawe swore by a number of strange outlandish names, that she would be revenged. That night she and the child both disappeared; and it was fully believed all round the country that she had jumped with him into the sea.

And so, after a while, it was all forgotten; and then there was a talk of Mr. Hawkshawe's marrying again, but Lady Clarissa did all she could to prevent it, because she hated the family to which the young lady belonged. However, Mr. Hawkshawe would not be hindered, and so he appointed a suite of rooms for his mother, with her own carriage and servants, that she need never meet his wife anywhere about the house, and then he went to London, and married Miss Merryweather, notwithstanding she was the daughter of a manufacturer. She had a very large fortune, but, poor thing! she had not much enjoyment of it. In six years she had three fine boys, and they all had the fair hair and fresh rosy complexion of their mother's family. However, their father loved them, and was as proud of them as he had been of his eldest boy, who is every bit a Hawkshawe, with his large black eyes, and jet black hair. As for Lady

Clarissa, she went on worse than ever. A few days after each baby was born, she had it brought to her, and took a good look at it; and when she saw the poor little innocent's sweet blue eyes and flaxen hair, she scowled at it as if it was a toad or a viper, and sent it away again. And the nurse that carried the youngest told me on her death-bed, that Lady Clarissa, as she looked at the blessed infant, muttered to herself, 'They're none of them Hawkshawes! But she shall repent it!' The nurse durstn't for her life repeat those words to anybody at the time, but things that transpired afterwards caused them to play upon her mind to that degree, that she could not die easy till she had confided them to some one, and so she told me."

"What was it that gave Lady Clarissa's words so much importance?" asked Ellen, with painful interest; for many points of the story tallied strangely with the hints thrown

out by Reginald respecting the character of his grandmother, and the fate of his brothers.

"It was this," replied Mrs. Sweetman, dropping her voice to a still lower key; "just as the eldest boy was growing up to manhood, and his father and mother were rejoicing over his growth and cleverness, for he had been to the best school in England, and Mr. Hawkshawe was talking of sending him to Oxford in another year, all at once Lady Clarissa seemed to take a great liking for him, and she began to dine with the rest of the family, and to spend her evenings with them. Mr. Hawkshawe was delighted, and his poor wife no doubt was pleased to see that she was no longer a bar between her husband and his mother, though she never seemed able to conquer her fear of the awful old lady. Well, one night everybody in the house heard the Death Wail; that is, as perhaps you've heard, Miss, some strange music that is

always heard before the death of any of the Hawkshawe family. The next day the poor boy had a slight cough, and her ladyship gave him some lozenges that she always carried in her pocket for her own cough. It has been whispered, though I don't know who the story began with, that she put *one* into his mouth, which was different from the rest, and that she took it out of a little gold box. However that may be, he was seized with terrible convulsions, and died that very night. The doctor said something about poison, and Lady Clarissa instantly made a great fuss about her lozenges, and sent some to a great chemist in London to be examined; but of course *they* were all right; and so the matter was dropped, for those who had suspicions were too much afraid to breathe a word about them. But the mourning for the eldest son was not over when the Death Wail was heard again louder than before, and the other two boys were

seized in the same way, and died within an hour of each other. It was said that these fits were common in their mother's family. Mr. Hawkshawe had their bodies opened, but no poison could be found, and so the poor lambs were buried beside their brother. Lady Clarissa seemed quite overpowered with grief, and went into the deepest mourning.

"Well, Miss," continued the house-keeper, "you'd think all this was horrors enough for one family; but stranger things yet was to come. The night after the funeral of the two boys the whole house was roused by the most fearful shrieks that mortal ears ever heard. All the servants rushed in alarm to Mrs. Hawkshawe's room, from which the cries proceeded. But Lady Clarissa and Mr. Hawkshawe, who had been sitting with his mother in her dressing room, were there first, all except Oliver. He was just going up to bed, after seeing

to the fastenings of the doors, and the safety of the house, when he heard the screams, and run into the room without a moment's hesitation, because he thought his lady must be on fire. What he saw there he has never, to my knowledge, revealed to anybody. Perhaps his life might not be worth much if he did. However, Mr. Hawkshawe and her ladyship sent all the servants out of the room; and as Oliver passed among them without seeming to see any of them, and looking as white as this counterpane, he muttered, 'I saw them all—all three! all poi——' or some word that began with a *p*, and then he gasped, and hurried away from his fellow-servants; and though they followed, and asked him what he had seen, he would not utter another word, but locked himself into his room. All the rest were too frightened to go to bed. Besides, poor Mrs. Hawkshawe continued screaming all through that dreary night. The house-

keeper—it was before I came, you know, Miss—went up and asked if she might send one of the men-servants for the doctor; but Mr. Hawkshawe was in such a rage with her for interfering, and looked so awful, that she durstn't for her life go near him again. Two of the men went up to Oliver's door several times, and still his light was burning, and they heard his voice, as if he was praying, which no doubt he was. You may be sure the servants were all frightened enough, for when they came to compare notes, and some told what they had heard Oliver say, and some said they had heard Mrs. Hawkshawe say in the midst of her screams, 'my children,' and some 'poison,' and others different words that all seemed to show that something dreadful had happened, they all believed that the spirits of the three boys had appeared to their mother, and that Oliver, running in first, had seen them too. What made them believe this

all the more was that when he came down in the morning his hair was white as snow. The day before, he was a fresh-coloured, cheerful sort of man, with jet black hair; but from that time no one ever saw a trace of colour on his cheeks, or a smile on his face, and his hair was that morning just what you see it now."

"And what more happened to Mrs. Hawkshawe?" asked Ellen, whose sympathies were aroused by the sorrows of that patient, timorous woman.

"She left off screaming after that night," replied Mrs. Sweetman, "but her senses were gone, and she has ever since been in the state she is in now. A great change came over Mr. Hawkshawe too; he became gloomy and silent, and looked ten years older. He had used to like company and gaiety, but after the death of his sons, and his poor wife's heavy affliction, he gave up society altogether, and scarcely ever saw anybody.

His only amusement was going out alone with his gun among the hills, and once, it was about two years ago, he met with a youth so like his lost child, Reginald, that he brought him home with him; and sure enough when they examined his left arm they found a natural mark which they knew him by, as well as the letters R. H., for Reginald Hawkshawe, which his mother had had a fancy to tattoo by the side of it. One would have thought the poor gentleman would have taken leave of his senses with joy at recovering his son; but his pleasure was soon checked, when he found out how terribly ignorant the boy was. If you'll believe me, Miss, he could scarcely so much as talk, and he did not know the names of the commonest things about the house. In fact he was just as if he had been brought up in a cave by some wild beast. He could not tell where he had lived, nor who he had lived with. At first my

master had the clergyman to come and teach him, but that wouldn't do. He would not learn from him, and he put himself into such dreadful passions that Mr. Gibson was afraid to come near him again. Then his father observed that he picked up words fast enough from the maid servants, so he engaged Miss Gibson, the curate's sister, to come every morning and instruct him; but the obstinate boy had taken such a violent hatred to his grandmother, that he could not bear the sight of an elderly woman, and poor Miss Gibson ran away after a five minutes' trial, almost scared out of her wits. After that he tried a young gentleman, but he could do no good; Mr. Reginald seemed jealous that any one so near his own age should be so much wiser than himself. Then my master went off to London and fetched you, Miss; and, dear me! how he has improved since!"

"And you really believe," said Ellen,

musingly, "that the spirits of those three poor boys appeared to their mother, and gave her an intimation of the cause of their death?"

"Indeed I do, Miss, as firmly as I believe in anything."

"Have they been seen again?" asked Ellen.

"*Something* has been seen, more than once," said Mrs. Sweetman, "and it is so well known, that there is not one of the servants besides Oliver who will go about the house alone after nightfall."

"But if Oliver really beheld, or even believed he beheld the apparitions in Mrs. Hawkshawe's room, one would suppose that he would be the most timid of all, because he would feel sure there were such things, and would fear to see them again," said Ellen.

"Oliver is prepared, Miss," replied the housekeeper, solemnly; "at every spare

moment he is reading his Bible, and we all think he spends half the night in prayer."

"It is a terrible tale," said Ellen, "and full of mystery; but let us hope that the darker part of it—the poisoning of all those boys by their own grandmother—is not true. If it were, surely some notice would have been taken of it."

"Why, you see, Miss, the bodies were examined by Mr. Hawkshawe's own wish, and nothing was found; and after the fright that drove his poor wife out of her mind, even if he knew or suspected how they came by their death, he could not accuse his own mother. And yet if he *did* know it, that would account for the change in his behaviour."

● "It is too dreadful to dwell upon," said Ellen, with a shudder. "Tell me something else before I go to sleep, or those poor boys and that terrible old lady will be in my dreams all night. Are there no other

ghosts about the house? Has not the first Mrs. Hawkshawe been seen by any one?"

"Oh dear yes!" replied Mrs. Sweetman, "she has been often seen."

"I thought so," said Ellen; "and did no one suspect that she might be still alive?"

"She alive! La, no!" exclaimed Mrs. Sweetman; "where could she have been hidden all these years?"

"Where was Reginald hidden?" said Ellen, "and who could have brought him up as though he had been nurtured in the cave of a wild beast? Who but a woman who was maddened by real or imaginary wrongs, and who took the sharpest vengeance in sending back a young savage to claim the family honours?"

"Then perhaps it was she who poisoned the children by the second wife," said Mrs. Sweetman; "she might want to get them out of the way."

"No, no," replied Ellen; "if they died

by poison, it was not given by *her* hand. They could not interfere with her son's rights, for they were illegitimate, and could not claim even the younger brother's portion. Is there a portrait of her in the house?" she asked, after a thoughtful pause.

"Oh yes! there's a large full-length picture of her in her riding habit, leaning upon her favourite horse," said Mrs. Sweetman; "it used to hang in the dining-room; but after she went away it was put into another room that is never used. I'll show it you when you get about again. It is in the room next to this."

"Thank you, Mrs. Sweetman," said Ellen, drowsily. "I think I can sleep now."

The housekeeper watched the heavy eyelids close over the soft grey eyes, and then stole gently back to her own bed.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DEATH WAIL.

THE following morning Ellen awoke to a strange sense of confusion, amid which the only permanent and real thing seemed to be that she was suffering acute pain in her wounded arm.

All else was vague and fleeting. She could not recollect who had wounded her ; but as she dozed, or became partially insensible, the strangest ideas upon this point chased each other through her brain. Sometimes she fancied that Lady Clarissa had bitten her ; sometimes that Mr. Hawkshawe had shot her for attempting to escape ;

sometimes that the strange dark woman who had peered at her through the bed-curtains was hanging her by a hook through the arm because she refused to eat a lozenge taken out of a little gold box.

"I will not have it!—It is poison!" she exclaimed, dashing out her hand with violence.

A crash of glass followed, and a muttered ejaculation from Mrs. Sweetman; and Ellen opened her eyes to find that in her half-delirious sleep she had flung down a glass of cooling drink which the good house-keeper, seeing her feverish and restless state, was holding to her lips, and trying to induce her to drink. She laughed faintly at her blunder, and drank another glass of the anti-febrile decoction, after which she again sank into a troubled sleep.

A short time afterwards Mr. Hawkshawe tapped softly at the door to inquire how she was progressing. Mrs. Sweetman allowed

him to approach the bed, that he might judge for himself. He stood at the foot, and gazed long and earnestly at the sleeping girl.

"Don't you think the doctor ought to be sent for, sir?" whispered the housekeeper.

"Not if your skill will suffice, my good lady," he replied. "I wish above all things, as I told you last night, to avoid having this sad accident known. Nevertheless, a horse shall be kept saddled that Dr. Welsh may be sent for at any moment of the day or night, if you see symptoms of danger."

At this moment Ellen opened her eyes, and fixed them intently upon Mr. Hawkshawe. She did not appear to recognise him, and her eyes wandered away and remained for some minutes riveted as upon some object at his right hand.

"There they are, standing beside you!" she said, in a low clear voice, extending her unwounded arm in the same direction; "all

three of them!—Golden-haired boys, beautiful as angels!—All poisoned!"

Her arm dropped, and her eyes closed again in deep slumber. Mr. Hawkshawe shuddered violently, and hurried out of the room without uttering a word.

Mrs. Sweetman was awe-struck. She fully believed that Ellen had actually beheld the apparitions of the three murdered boys (forgetting the more probable solution of the mystery—that the vision was only the creation of a disordered brain, stimulated by her own recital of the previous night), and though she knew that such innocent souls must be harmless, yet the dread of encountering any supernatural visitant so overcame her that she sank upon her knees, hid her face in the bedclothes, and prayed aloud.

A touch on the shoulder startled her. She looked round, almost expecting to see three youthful figures in white garments;

but there was only one, and that was clothed in black.

"Oliver!" she exclaimed, rising from her knees, and trembling from head to foot,—
"O dear, how you frightened me!"

"You were frightened enough before, Mrs. Sweetman," he replied, in a subdued tone; "how is it? Have you seen them?"

"No, thank Heaven! *I* have not," she replied; "but *she* saw them. She said they were standing there, by master's side. And then he rushed out like a madman."

"As well he might," said the old man, with a sigh; "and yet, poor gentleman! he is guiltless of any wrong to them. No doubt she did see them. They cannot rest."

"Those are awful words, Oliver," said Mrs. Sweetman, in a terrified whisper; "do you mean to say that you know how the poor boys died? Many folks say you do."

"I say nothing, missis, and never shall, unless a great alteration takes place," re-

plied the old man; "and I advise you not to trust too much to what the gossips tell you. Nobody *can* know the truth. But I'm forgetting the errand I came for. Mr. Hawkshawe wishes to know how the young lady is, and whether her nerves are shaken at all."

"Tell him she has not opened her eyes since he was here," said Mrs. Sweetman, "and that she is in a calm sleep, from which I hope she will awake much better."

Oliver went out with his noiseless step. Mrs. Sweetman deputed one of the maids to watch quietly in Ellen's apartment during her absence, and descended to the kitchen to attend to her domestic concerns, bidding her deputy ring the bell in case the patient awoke, or appeared restless. In about an hour she returned, and found that Ellen was still locked in that deep healing slumber.

"And no wonder," observed the girl

who had been left to watch her (I shall not venture to transcribe her Cornish dialect); "for somebody has been playing such lovely music, it 'most sent me to sleep too."

"Playing music!" said the housekeeper, in amazement. "Who can have been playing music? Was it Master Reginald?"

"Oh no, I see him walking about in the garden all the time," said the girl.

"Who could it have been?" said Mrs. Sweetman. "What sort of music was it? Was it like a pianna?"

"No—not a bit like a pianna," replied the girl. "It was more like the organ at church when it plays very soft and sweet, and like women's voices, you know. I dare say if you sit quiet a bit you'll hear it."

They sat still, listening, and presently their ears were greeted by a strain of soft wild music like the solemn breathings of the wind over an Eolian harp.

"The Lord have mercy upon us!" ex-

claimed the housekeeper. "There!—go down, Grace, go down; and don't you say a word about this music to anybody. It's the death warning of the family. Who is it to be, I wonder?"

"Is it for Miss Maynard?" whispered Grace, turning pale, and trembling like an aspen leaf.

"No—it would not play for her, because she is not one of the family," said Mrs. Sweetman. "It must be a Hawkshawe, either by birth or marriage. Pray Heaven it may be the old lady! Now mind you don't mention it," she repeated, seeing that the girl was very anxious to get out of the haunted room, adding, with a stroke of policy to enforce the performance of her request, "it always brings ill luck upon the first person who speaks about it."

"Oh no! I won't say a word," said Grace, clutching at the door handle; "only pray don't set me to watch here again,

please. I don't like it at all." And she beat a hasty retreat.

Probably Mrs. Sweetman relished the lonely watch as little as her deputy. She was, at least, very glad when Ellen awoke, and asked for something to eat. She was, as her good nurse had predicted, considerably better after her long sleep.

"I hope you were not disturbed, Miss," said the housekeeper, anxious to know whether she had heard the music.

"Oh no, quite the contrary, if you can understand how that may be," replied Ellen, smiling; "for I was just awaking when that Eolian harp began to play, and it sent me to sleep again. Where is it?"

"Where is what, Miss?" asked Mrs. Sweetman, in a state of utter bewilderment.

"Why, that Eolian harp that has been playing so sweetly," said Ellen; "surely you must have heard the music?"

"Oh! yes, Miss, I heard some music,"

replied Mrs. Sweetman; "but I don't know where it came from, nor who played it."

"I know the sound of that music well," said the patient; "it is not any *person* who plays it." (Mrs. Sweetman shuddered.) "It is an instrument with strings, that is placed in an open window; and when the wind blows through it, it produces that beautiful wild music that you heard. It must have been fixed up this morning, or I should have heard it before. No doubt that strange youth, Reginald, being unable yet to play well enough to please me, has placed this 'harp of the winds' somewhere near, that its wild tones may lull me to rest."

"I dare say he has, Miss," said Mrs. Sweetman, to whom, however, Ellen's last remarks had been only half addressed. Her belief in the supernatural origin of the sounds she had heard remained, nevertheless, as firm as ever.

Anxious to prevent any further inquiries on this subject, which might lead to discoveries dangerously agitating and alarming to her patient, Mrs. Sweetman commenced her preparations for dressing the wound. It was progressing favourably; but the doctress thought it advisable that Ellen should remain in bed, on low diet, for that day at least.

Many were the anxious inquiries made at the door during the day by Mr. Hawkshawe and Reginald, but the former did not again request leave to enter the room, and the latter was of course rigorously excluded.

The music was not heard again, and the housekeeper went to bed, in the hope that it might not be repeated.

Ellen had frequently thought of it, and wished she might hear again the wild, soothing, dream-like tones. By some untraceable chain of imagination she had

linked the music with the mysterious face that had looked through her curtains the night before; and now, as her eyes were closing, she opened them again to see if the swarthy countenance was at its post. The space was vacant. Only the fire-light danced upon a large old wardrobe that stood against the wall. Her eyes closed fast, and she was dreaming that the Eolian melody was murmuring in her ear, when its tones swept so loud and so near that they awoke her with a start.

The harp, if harp it were, seemed to be actually in the room; then it sank away, and moaned outside the windows. Again it passed along the lofty ceiling, and then died away in mournful wailings through the long, echoing corridors.

She raised her head and listened. A slight motion of the curtains caught her eye. There was the gipsy-like face again, but so changed, so haggard, so full of pain,

so death-like, that she could hardly recognise it.

"Oh, heavens! She is dying! Help! help!" cried Ellen, with a shriek of terror, at the same time falling back, fainting.

Aroused by the cry, Mrs. Sweetman rushed to her assistance. For a long time the fainting fit refused to yield to the restoratives which she brought; and she began to wonder whether the warning could have been intended for the young lady, though a stranger to the family.

Mingled with much real sorrow at the probable death of her fair patient, came sundry misgivings concerning the consequences to herself, if a coroner's jury should return a verdict of culpable negligence in undertaking the cure of a gun-shot wound, without calling in the aid of a regular practitioner.

At length, to her great joy, the poor girl gave signs of returning consciousness. She

pressed her hand to her forehead, looked hurriedly round, and then seemed by a sudden effort to recollect all.

"See to her!" she said, pointing towards the farther side of the bed, where the face had appeared. "Has she fallen on the ground? Is she lying there now? Oh! see to her! Never mind me—I am quite well now."

"Who are you talking about, Miss?" demanded the bewildered housekeeper; "there is nobody here. You must keep quiet, and not give way to these fancies."

"It was no fancy," replied Ellen, earnestly. "I saw the face as plainly as I now see yours; and death was written upon it. It was—I am sure it was—the face of the first Mrs. Hawkshawe—of Reginald's mother."

"The Lord preserve us!" cried Mrs. Sweetman; "she's seen a ghost!"

"No—it was not a ghost," said Ellen; "it

was a living, or rather a dying woman. I recollect now that as I fell, when that madman fired, I heard a scream from the other side of the door, and afterwards there was a knock against it, which was evidently a signal to Reginald. She must have been outside the door, and the shot, after passing through my arm, went through the panel, and struck her. Oh, heaven! are the crimes and miseries of this unhappy family to have no end? That wretched youth has destroyed his own mother! I feel convinced it is she; but I must see her portrait, and have positive proof of it before I speak to Reginald."

"Oh, dear! she is quite beside herself!" cried the old lady, vainly endeavouring to keep Ellen from jumping out of bed; "she'll go and catch her death, and I can't hold her."

"I am not delirious, Mrs. Sweetman," said Ellen, as calmly as her anxiety would

allow. "I shall run but slight risk if I wrap up well, and am careful; and what is that, when a fellow-creature is suffering, and dying within our reach, with perhaps no one to succour her, or breathe one word of hope or comfort to her departing soul?"

"But, my sweet young lady!" remonstrated the housekeeper, "the door is fast locked, so how could anybody have got in?"

"I shall not stop to inquire how," replied Ellen. "I only know that she was here. Do you not remember the noise you heard last night, when you thought I was walking about the room? She was here then, but I did not tell you, lest you should be frightened, and I thought it might be only my own imagination when I saw her face looking through the curtains. Help me on with my dressing-gown. It is useless to try to prevent my going."

Convinced at last that it was useless, yet

still inclined to remonstrate, Mrs. Sweetman did as she was bid, and Ellen was soon enveloped in as many wrappers as she could bear the weight of.

"Now," said she, "show me the picture."

"Oh, dear! dear! How shall I answer for it to Mr. Hawkshawe if you go and kill yourself?" cried the perplexed housekeeper.

"I shall not die before I have time to exculpate you entirely," said Ellen, scarcely able to repress a smile; "but I assure you I run very little danger if you will guide me at once to the picture. If I have to run about the house seeking for it, it may do me great harm."

"But where's the use of your going now to look at that picture, Miss?" said Mrs. Sweetman. "Why not stay till to-morrow? The picture won't run away."

"But the woman may die," replied Ellen. "If she be Mrs. Hawkshawe, depend upon it Reginald knows where to find her. And

in one word, Mrs. Sweetman, if you do not instantly lead the way to this picture, I shall seek for it myself."

With a deep groan, Mrs. Sweetman thereupon took up the candle, and walked out into the lobby, followed by the impatient Ellen.

CHAPTER X.

WHY THE DEATH WAIL WAS HEARD.

MRS. SWEETMAN conducted Ellen into the lobby, and then entered the room immediately on their left.

It was a large apartment, similar to that which Ellen occupied, except that the furniture was older, and looked quite neglected, and that it had the mouldy, damp smell usual in rooms that have been long closed.

A large picture stood by the wall, and towards this the two visitors advanced.

"Here it is," said the housekeeper, holding up the light.

It was a full-length portrait of a beautiful

brunette, dressed in riding costume, and with ~~one~~ hand resting on the mane of a magnificent horse.

"It is the same," said Ellen, after an earnest perusal of the face; "that countenance is too remarkable to be mistaken. Go now, Mrs. Sweetman, as quickly as possible, and call Reginald. Tell him to come to me instantly. I will sit by the fire, and keep myself very quiet, while you are gone."

With a smothered exclamation expressive of vain remonstrance, Mrs. Sweetman, after assisting her patient to return to her room, went on her errand, while Ellen sat thinking over her plans.

The first step certainly was to obtain from Reginald all the information possible respecting his mother; and that information must guide her future conduct. The recollection of that haggard and pain-stricken face dwelt upon her mind, and she felt impatient of the housekeeper's prolonged

absence, and fancied every moment that she sat inactive was a crime against humanity. At length the door opened.

"Shall Mr. Reginald come in, Miss?" asked Mrs. Sweetman.

"Yes—yes," cried Ellen, starting up, and advancing with her hand raised and extended with a gesture of adjuration. "Oh, Reginald, do not imagine that I desire to pry into the secrets of your family; but tell me truly, is your mother alive?"

Reginald's fine eyes were cast down; he appeared much confused, and made no reply.

"Answer me, answer me!" she entreated, placing her hand upon his with a gentle pressure, for she knew by experience, that the touch of that soft white hand was a talisman to control him in his most wilful moods.

The charm failed now for the first time. He pressed her hand to his lips, and held it between his own, while he looked at her seriously, and replied, with a grave dignity

which she had never before observed in him, "Ellen, I have always felt you to be my superior in everything but brute strength, and the power of loving intensely. I have not been too proud to acknowledge your superiority, and I have profited more by your instructions than perhaps you have imagined. One of your strongest precepts has been 'keep a promise sacred.' You now demand, with those passionate eyes fixed upon mine, that I shall break a promise solemnly pledged. Not even for *you* will I break my word."

He dropped her hand, and turned away. Ellen was astounded. Where or how, she thought, had he suddenly acquired a command of language to which he had never before been able to attain? And whence came that decided and manly bearing? She felt that he was her pupil no longer.

"Last night," she said, "a face looked at me through my curtains. It was the face

of a dark-complexioned woman, bearing a striking resemblance to yourself. To-night I saw the same countenance again, but so distorted by suffering that I know she is very ill. I have seen the portrait of your mother, and by that means I know that it is she."

The young man uttered a cry of anguish and darted from the room.

In a few minutes he returned, and summoned both Ellen and the housekeeper to follow him. He led them into the room which they had before visited, and drawing aside the curtains which had concealed her from their sight on the former occasion, he disclosed the figure of a woman, writhing with pain, though uttering no groan.

"It is Mrs. Hawkshawe!" exclaimed Mrs. Sweetman, glancing from the living woman to the portrait, and back again.

"It is," repeated Reginald, in a low voice to Ellen. "Can you tell what is the matter with her?"

"It is useless to try to cure me," said the sufferer. "I know I am dying. I did not feel it much at first, but it is killing me now."

"What is it, mother? What do you say is killing you?" demanded Reginald, fondly.

"You could not help it," she said, gazing at him with filmy eyes. "You did not know I was behind the door, and the ball went through and struck me. But it was not your fault, my own loved boy!"

"*I!*" shrieked Reginald, in a frenzy—"I shoot you! Mother, mother! unsay those words! Do not drive me mad by telling me *I* have killed you!"

"'Tis a just punishment," she said. "I brought you up like a savage to revenge myself on your father, and the consequence of my folly and wickedness has fallen upon myself. I am justly punished."

"But the blow should not have come from *my* hand," whispered Reginald, in a voice choking with grief.

“Do not grieve so much about it, my son,” said the invalid. “It was an accident, and we must all die at last.”

“Are you prepared for death?” asked Ellen. “Will you not see the clergyman?”

“Had I not better send for the doctor?” suggested Mrs. Sweetman. “She may not be so bad as she thinks.”

“No, no,” cried the dying woman, impatiently, and endeavouring to raise herself from the bed; “I shall be dead before he can get here. Neither doctor nor clergyman. You shall pray for me, Ellen Maynard, when I have spoken of some worldly concerns. Your prayers, that come fresh from the heart, are better than those a priest says by rote.”

“Do you wish Mr. Hawkshawe to be called?” asked Ellen.

“No,” she replied, quickly. “He has long believed me dead; let him think so still.”

“Let me send for him,” said Ellen, imploringly; “even at this last moment a reconciliation will be sweet. Think of your early love——”

“With thoughts of the early love, come memories of wrongs and animosities,” said Mrs. Hawkshawe, gloomily. “I will not see him. Promise me, all of you, that he shall never know that I did not die years ago, when I left him.”

“But he *must* know it soon,” urged Mrs. Sweetman. “How can the funeral——”

“He will know nothing of my funeral,” interrupted Mrs. Hawkshawe. “There are others besides him to see to that. Life is ebbing fast—will you give me your promise, all of you? I know I can trust you, Reginald, without another pledge.”

“I promise,” said Ellen, solemnly.

“And so do I,” sobbed the housekeeper.

“I am satisfied,” said the dying woman; “and now I want another promise from you,

Ellen. You have been Reginald's good angel ever since you came here. You have laboured successfully to undo all the evil that I, his bad angel, have been doing for years. I am going, and your influence will be undivided. This," she said, pointing to the wound in her breast, "this is the last act of the evil spirit. It was my hand, not his, that did it. Do not leave your good work half done. Do not leave him."

"I am bound to remain for a year," faltered Ellen, feeling frightened, as she recalled the bond that held her to that fearful house.

"You will not leave him *then*?" demanded Mrs. Hawkshawe, eagerly. "That is what I mean by leaving your work half done. Think you that all the evil I have implanted in his mind during twenty years can be rooted out by you in twelve months? I own that you have done wonders already, but without you he will relapse; nay, he

will become ten times worse,—he will go mad. He loves you, Ellen. Promise his dying mother that you will marry him!”

“Marry him!” cried Ellen, in terror and astonishment. “Oh no! Never! Never!”

Reginald seized her by the shoulder, swung her violently round, and held her in an iron grip, while he glared ferociously upon her, and said in a voice that resembled the low growl of a lion, “You will *not* marry me! Do you hate me, then?”

“I need not hate you, though I cannot marry you, Reginald,” she replied, shrinking under the painful pressure of his muscular hand upon her shoulder. “If there were no other reason, I could not marry you while under the dread that at any moment you may lose your temper, and murder me.”

“What is the other reason?” he demanded, sternly.

“You have no right to ask,” she said, trying in vain to release her shoulder.

"She loves some one else, Reginald," said his mother, whose feminine instinct led her at once to the correct interpretation of Ellen's words.

"Is it so, Ellen? Is it so indeed?" said he, mournfully, and dropping his arms.

"I tell you, you have no right to ask me that question," said Ellen; "but as this painful scene must be brought to a close, I will answer you. Yes—I love and am loved; more than that, I am solemnly betrothed!"

"Mother! mother!" cried the young man, throwing himself on his knees, and clasping his mother in his arms, "stay—stay a while—and take me with you!"

"Nay, not so, my son," she replied; "there is long life and happiness in store for you. Hush! be still!" she continued, rising slowly in the bed, while her eyes were fixed upon vacancy, and her forefinger and outstretched right arm pointed as to objects which were passing before her.

"Hush! Speak not! The future is unrolling to my view—for the last time! Would I might tell all that I see! He shows her the way of escape! Ha! fear not! there is no danger for the firm heart—the steady foot—the resolute will! See how the flames arise! The guilty ones are consumed! The boat! the boat!—it will be dashed to pieces! No! It is safe on the sands, and she is rescued. Now is the Death Wail! But not for him! Not for the brave soldier! See! He bears his wounded comrade away amid a shower of rifle balls! That is for her sake—May she one day know it! It is cloudy now—my sight is failing—they pass too quickly, and I cannot see. Ah! one glimpse more! Yes! *They stand at the altar!*"

She fell back into the arms of her son, but so distinct and strong had been her utterance, her action so energetic, that they could not believe that she was dead.

Mrs. Sweetman was the first to discover that life was fled. She communicated the intelligence to Ellen by a look, fearing to rouse the anger of Reginald by telling him what he would so little like to hear.

"Come away," said Ellen, taking him by the arm; "it is useless to remain here. Mrs. Sweetman will see that all proper attention is paid to her remains."

"She is dead, then!" said Reginald, mournfully, as he rose, calm and collected; "the only being who ever loved, or who ever will love me!"

"Do not say that, Reginald," said Ellen, deeply sympathizing with his feeling of desolation—a desolation which she had herself but too keenly experienced. "It depends wholly upon yourself to become tenderly loved by many."

"But not by you, Ellen," he replied; "and I do not care for the love of many. Let us go. You must not stay here, Mrs.

Sweetman," he continued, taking the old lady's hand, and, to her infinite astonishment, pressing it warmly; "I thank you sincerely for your kindness, and your good intentions; but did you not hear *her* say that there were others who would see to her funeral? We must leave her alone, and they will fetch her."

This speech conjured up such awful and supernatural notions that, frightened almost out of her wits, the housekeeper fled from the chamber of death, and sought refuge in Ellen's bedroom, where the cheerful fire imparted an idea of security and companionship.

Reginald returned to the bed, and held the candle so as to throw its light upon the face of the corpse. He stood for some minutes in sorrowful contemplation of the still beautiful features, then pressed a kiss upon the pale cheek, and with a heavy sigh turned away.

"What have I now to live for, Ellen?" he said; "in one night I have lost both mother and hope."

"We can live without hope, Reginald," she replied. "I have lost both my parents, and with them I lost all hope of happiness where I had most expected it. And yet I live on. I do my duty, as far as I am able, and I am cheerful, though not happy."

"Are *you* not happy?" he exclaimed. "Do *you* not hope? Do you mean that you will not be married to—to *him*?"

"You must not ask me what I mean," said Ellen, in a tone of gentle rebuke. "I could not make you understand it without entering into all the particulars of my life, which it is needless to tell you. What I wished to impress upon you is, that while we do our duty, and submit humbly to the will of Heaven, we cannot be altogether unhappy, though we may be far less happy than we had hoped to be."

"I wish I could know that you were happy, Ellen," said Reginald, looking at her in a thoughtful, dreamy way. "I feel and think a great deal more than I can say, and perhaps I shall not make you understand me; but sometimes I feel that if you tried to go away, or liked any one else better than me, I could kill you. But you know that," he added, with a shuddering glance at the corpse; "you have had a terrible proof how real that dreadful feeling is. It is almost as bad sometimes, when you are playing at chess with my father. I have thought then that I would kill you, and bury you where no one else could find your body, and that I would spend my life at the place where I had put you, and no one should ever look at you again. And then, of late, I have been so delighted to see you look smiling and pleased, even though I have not shared in your pleasure; that I have thought I *must* be happy if you

were so. But now, if you do not marry the man you love, you cannot be happy. Why do you not try to love me, Ellen?"

"Love cannot be controlled by the will," she replied. "If it were so, and I could give my affections where my reason tells me I might expect the greatest happiness, I should probably transfer them to you, Reginald—there is so much of native nobleness and generosity behind your violent and reckless temper. As it is, you must rest contented with my esteem and friendship—these you will be sure to have if you continue as you have begun. I shall love you then as much as I should if you were my brother."

"Could you love your brother after *that*?" he asked, pointing to his mother's body, while a shudder passed through his iron frame that told how deeply he felt the consequences of his rashness, though he said not much on the subject.

"Yes, and pity him still more," said Ellen, in a tone of deep compassion; "for you would not willingly have hurt her, and your remorse will be lifelong."

"And your own wound," he said, gloomily—"can you pity me after that? Did I not hurt *you* willingly? Did I not try to kill you? Ay—and should have done it had you not started aside at the moment I fired!"

"I pity you for the furious temper which urged you to it, and forgive you the injury you have done me," replied Ellen. "You were mad, and knew not what you did, and for such there was a prayer uttered more than eighteen centuries ago, which ensures pardon."

The young man stood for a moment hesitating whether to speak or not; then in silence led her to the door of her own room.

"Good night, Ellen," he said, kissing her

hand; "do not be frightened if you hear footsteps in this lobby to-night. They will have to come past here," and he glanced towards the room where his mother lay dead.

"I understand you," said Ellen. "But why should she not be honourably buried in the family vault? What is this mysterious funeral that you will give her?"

"It is all done by her own wish," he replied; "do you not know the race to which she belongs?"

"I believe so," said Ellen, with hesitation.

"If you are well enough to-morrow night to bear the fatigue, and the damp air of the dungeons," said Reginald, "you shall witness her funeral. I shall see you before then. Good night."

Ellen re-entered her chamber, and Reginald descended the turret-stairs to the library. With a gloomy brow and a heavy heart he took down the fatal rifle. He

gazed on it for some minutes in stern silence, reflecting on the deed that had been done when he last held it in his hands. The cold drops stood upon his brow, and his compressed lip quivered with the sharp agony that wrung his soul.

“Oh, mother! oh, Ellen!” he groaned, rather than uttered. He then charged the gun, but only with powder, and putting two more charges into his pocket, returned to the staircase. Instead of ascending, however, he opened a small arched door, the same that Oliver had pointed out to Ellen as leading to the dungeons.

The door was of immense thickness, very old, and studded with iron. The highly ornamented hinges extended over more than half the width of it, and might have been expected to creak dismally as they moved; but apparently they were kept well oiled, for the heavy door swung back noiselessly, disclosing a flight of stone steps, even more

narrow and steep than those which led to the upper storey. These Reginald descended with a firm step, which seemed familiar with their many inequalities.

At some distance below he quitted the stairs, and passing through another small door, the key of which was in the lock, he stood in the open air, near the bottom of the ravine that was overlooked by the windows of Ellen's chamber. There was no moon, but the stars were bright, and gave sufficient light for one so well acquainted with his path, dangerous and difficult as it was. Though near the bottom of the ravine, he was still some twenty feet above the level of the brook that roared and rushed below, when he crossed to the opposite side by a bridge of very primitive construction, formed by the trunk of a fallen tree. He walked over with the indifferent air of one well accustomed to find a safe footing upon its knotted surface, and began to climb an

intricate and winding path that wound its course up the almost precipitous, though thickly wooded bank.

When he gained the summit he paused and looked at the grim pile of building that crowned the opposite side of the ravine. From two of the windows gleamed a dim lurid light that waxed and waned as the fire-light shone more or less strongly through the closed curtains of Ellen's room. It spoke of life and warmth.

The neighbouring windows were dark, and within them was the icy chill and shadow of death.

A strangely mingled train of thoughts, or rather impulses, of sorrow, remorse, despair, self-destruction, love, hope, determination, and heroic devotion, swept through his brain. He was roused from this kind of reverie by the striking of the old house clock—one, two. He started off over the hills at a rapid pace. Arrived at the top of

a slight eminence at the commencement of a narrow winding valley between two loftier hills, he stopped. There were no visible signs of any human habitation near; but a faint smell of burning wood or peat was plainly perceptible. He fired his gun; reloaded, fired—again a third time, and stood listening. In a few seconds three shots from the neighbouring valley replied; on hearing which he shouldered his gun and returned home.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GRAVE BY THE SEA.

THE agitating scenes which Ellen had gone through, and the expectation of hearing the mysterious feet which were to bear their ghastly burden past her door, prevented her from sleeping.

Mrs. Sweetman had taken the precaution of soothing her own nerves with a glass of hot brandy and water, and was soon comfortably asleep; but any such restorative being out of the question in Ellen's case, she lay awake, a prey to the most bewildering phantasies.

She heard the clock strike two, then three;

and still the footsteps of the unknown bearers of the dead had not struck upon her eagerly listening ears. At length there was a sound, faint, confused, like the tread of many muffled feet. She started up, wrapped a cloak around her, and looked cautiously out. At the top of the turret-stairs she beheld a group that long remained pictured in her mind, with its Rembrandt-like effects of brilliant light and intense shadow.

Two men, of wild and picturesque appearance, bore between them what she knew must be the body of Mrs. Hawkshawe, enveloped in a large black cloak or pall. They were just beginning the descent of the stairs. Reginald stood above, holding a lamp raised high. The light fell strongly upon his pale face, contrasting with his bushy beard and raven hair. A few hours had done upon his countenance the work of years. He looked like a man of thirty. The last Ellen saw of them was when Reginald

stooped to place his hand upon the shoulder of the corpse, lest it should be grazed against the wall. The natural, loving action, brought the tears into her eyes, and when she had dashed them away, the faint reflection from the lamp was alone visible.

On the following afternoon, Reginald begged to be allowed to speak with her. Ellen was struck with his altered manner. Instead of a rough imperious demand, it was a gentle request. She was dressed, and sitting up on the sofa, and admitted him instantly. There was a change in his very walk and carriage. Instead of the wild, bounding step, that had often reminded her of some savage warrior of olden time, his gait was slow, firm, and dignified. His noble head was bowed in thought or grief; but the slight stoop, in place of detracting from his height, served only to make him appear more manly and majestic.

Ellen turned pale as she noticed these

changes, and said to herself, "I *must* go away."

Had she been questioned as to her reason for forming this resolve, perhaps she would have been somewhat puzzled to find it.

Reginald kissed her hand with the gravity of a Spanish Don, and seated himself on a chair at a short distance from the sofa. Here again she saw a difference; formerly he would have wanted a place by her side, or on the floor at her feet, with his curly head lolling on her lap.

"Mrs. Sweetman tells me you are much better to-day, Ellen," he began. "I feared you would be worse after last night," and he heaved a deep sigh. "Shall you be strong enough to bear the fatigue of what I mentioned to you?"

"Quite strong enough," she replied.

"You will have to go through some very cold, damp places," said he; "you must consider it well before you run any risk;

and if you go, you must put on thick boots, and clothe yourself as warmly as possible."

"I have no fear," she replied; "the fever is quite gone now; I am only rather weak."

"I fear you are *very* weak," he said, with another heavy sigh. "Did you lose much blood?"

"Not much, I believe," was the reply. "The weakness is in consequence of the fever, together with the low diet, and the effects of fright."

"You lost some blood," he said, taking from his bosom a handkerchief that had been used to bind her arm, and of which he had by some means possessed himself.

"Ah!" cried Ellen, shuddering, "how horrid it looks! Throw it into the fire!"

"Never!" he answered; "at least not yet. If ever you become my wife, Ellen, I will burn this handkerchief, and strive for your sake to think no more of the deed which

was done when this blood flowed. Till then its place is here, to remind me of my crimes."

He replaced the handkerchief, and she saw with pain that he put it inside his shirt.

"How can you do so?" she said, with an air of disgust. "How can you be so dirty?"

"Dirty!" he repeated, fixing on her a look in which a wild kind of triumph was the predominant expression. "Ellen, you have never loved!"

"What do you mean?" she asked. "What has that to do with it?"

"Never mind now," he replied. "I hope to teach you the meaning of it one day. Will you remember that I owe you the lesson?"

"You must talk more clearly if you wish me to understand you," she said, coldly.

"When I give you the lesson I will endeavour to be as explicit as possible," said he, rising, and again kissing her hand. He held it for a moment, and then added, with another of his mournful sighs, "I will come for you a little before twelve o'clock, if you are really determined to go."

"It will be a melancholy pleasure, as well as a duty," said Ellen. "I will be ready for you."

He bowed his head, and went out of the room.

"Dear me!" half-soliloquised Mrs. Sweetman. "Only to think that the other day, as might be, he could scarcely speak at all; and now he talks dictionary words as clever as anybody."

Ellen could almost have smiled at the old lady's quaint remark, but other and more serious thoughts then occupied her mind. She took a prayer-book from the table by her side, and opening it at the

service for the dead, remained for the whole evening earnestly studying it, and committing to memory the greater part of the prayers. The housekeeper saw how she was occupied, guessed at the object she had in view, and held a respectful silence.

At half-past eleven Reginald knocked softly at the door, and found Ellen prepared to accompany him. He would not rest satisfied until he had examined her boots, and convinced himself that they were thick enough to protect her from the ill effects of the cold damp floorings of the dungeons. Her cloak then underwent a scrutiny, after which he led her away, recommending Mrs. Sweetman to lie down and sleep till their return.

Ellen shivered as the chill air blew on her when the little door was opened. Her companion perceived it, and wrapped round her a large fur railway rug, which hung by the library door.

"It is too heavy," said Ellen, trying to disengage herself from its voluminous folds.

"I could not walk in it."

"I don't expect you to do so," he replied; and taking her in his arms, he carried her down the steep and broken stairs as easily as if she had been an infant.

Ellen was not a sylph. She had a tall, well-developed figure, and she possessed more strength and activity than usually belong to girls in these degenerate days. In the times that Spenser sings of, she might have been a Britomart, or coming nearer to actualities, a Joan of Arc. She knew, too, that Reginald was strong—very strong; but she had formed no accurate notion of *how* strong, until now, when she found herself as helpless as a child in those Titanic arms.

"He can never be my pupil again," she thought; "I can never recover even the semblance of authority. I can walk now—

I would rather walk," she said aloud, and trying to struggle.

"Little fool! keep quiet, or you will knock your head against the wall," was his half-angry reply.

"But I prefer walking," said Ellen.

"And I prefer carrying you," he replied.

"You hurt my arm," she said. This was true, but it was her own fault for moving it.

Instantly he stopped, re-adjusted the wrapper, took her up again, and went on. They were in total darkness, but he walked with the unhesitating step of a blind man who knows his way. Presently a gleam of light shot across the narrow staircase. They passed through another door which stood open, and there Reginald set Ellen down, seated her on a chair that was placed ready for her, covered her carefully with the rug, and whispering, "Stay here till I come for you," quitted her and walked

towards the spot whence the light proceeded.

Ellen had now time to look about her. The place in which she found herself was a long narrow chamber, with a high vaulted roof, and no apparent communication with the outer air. The floor was paved, and at intervals along the walls were stone seats, rudely shaped. In the wall above the one nearest to her she noticed an iron ring from which depended a rusty chain. No doubt the rest were similarly furnished; more than suggesting the idea that this horrible place had echoed to the groans of miserable captives, the victims of feudal or priestly tyranny.

Little leisure, however, had she for these observations, ere her attention was riveted upon a group of persons who were assembled about midway down the vault. There were thirteen of them, among whom the commanding figure of Reginald towered pre-

eminent. In the centre of this group was a stone bench, resembling those along the walls, and on this lay the body of Mrs. Hawkshawe, covered with a pall. Six of the men who stood round, bore lighted torches that cast a bright though fitful light upon the scene, the low-arched ceiling, the massive walls, and the silent and motionless figures, all clad alike in long mourning cloaks.

Ellen gazed in wondering expectation of what would be done next, as they were evidently waiting for something. Presently the tread of many feet was heard, proceeding from the lower end of the dungeon, and a crowd of wild-looking men and women, dimly visible by the light of a few scattered torches, came hurriedly on. They crowded round the rude bier, each eager to get a look at the face of the corpse, and then, following an old crone, bent nearly double by age, who raised her shrill pipe to give the key,

they commenced a low wailing dirge. Ellen had listened to the finest compositions of the greatest musicians, with full orchestra and a noble organ, but nothing so thrilling, so terrible in its wild pathos, as that gipsy dirge, had she ever heard. The women's voices sometimes rose into almost a shriek of agony, then sank into a low dismal wail; the voices of the men were never loud, but the great volume of sound from so many strong bass throats, singing in unison, had an effect beyond that of the mightiest organ. Perhaps the strange wildness of the scene, and her own weakened nerves, had something to do with it—but her senses reeled, and seemed about to forsake her.

In the midst of the chant, the six men who did not carry torches lifted the litter on which the corpse lay, and bore it away down the vault, followed by the crowd, huddled promiscuously together. Reginald returned to Ellen, drew the hood of her

cloak down so as to conceal her features, and taking her by the hand, led her after the strange funeral procession. They left the vault by another door, resembling that by which they had entered it, and Ellen, after some clambering among broken fragments of rock, was surprised to find herself on the beach of the small bay, so enclosed by precipitous rocks that there seemed to be no access to it except by boats. The brook that rushed through the glen below her window, and whose wild music had so often lulled her to sleep, here formed an estuary; and a cascade, which she rightly judged proceeded from a stream in the garden, sprang down the rugged face of the rocks in a halo of spray and foam. The moon was at the full, and gave to view the whole scene in hasty snatches, as the dense black clouds that scudded tumultuously across the sky, left for a moment a clear space around her. Ellen was scarcely conscious

at the time of observing all this, or thinking about it at all, but it made an impression on her mind that lasted long after.

The clouds gathered thicker, and the dim light of the torches alone cast a lurid glare upon the wild figures that stood round an open grave, dug in the sands above high-water mark. The wind moaned and whistled as wild and shrill as the voices of the women, and the sullen booming of the sea lent a yet deeper bass to the funeral chorus. Ellen clung to Reginald's arm, and for a moment the deathly faintness again came over her. She thought it must be all some terrible dream—that it could not be a reality. But she quickly recovered herself. The consciousness of having her prayer-book in her hand recalled her by reminding her of the purpose for which she had brought it. But there was not light enough to read by, and therefore she began, in a low but clear voice, to repeat those

parts of the burial service which she had learned. The young man bowed his head and listened. She caught his reverent, attentive look, and spoke with increased distinctness; and had the satisfaction of hearing him join in the deep *Amen*.

With no ceremonial but that lugubrious chant, which was more like a charm to scare away evil spirits, than a prayer for mercy and redemption, the funeral ended. The sand was shovelled in upon the uncoffined body, and all made smooth and level above, leaving no mound to mark the grave. All stood silent for a moment; then one man fetched a large stone and placed it over her; all followed his example, and a cairn of considerable size was piled up in a few minutes. All now looked at Reginald. With but little effort he took up an enormous boulder, which two of the men had vainly endeavoured to stir, and placed it gently on the summit of the cairn. Then

he waved his arm to them as if in dismissal. They bowed before him, and hastened without speaking to two large boats that were drawn up on the beach. Reginald stood silent till they had all embarked, and put off upon the troubled sea.

"I have killed their queen," he said, in a solemn tone; "and yet *they* do not account me a murderer. How am I accounted *there?*" and he pointed upwards.

"Not as a murderer, Reginald," said Ellen. "Not even human justice could accuse you of being the wilful cause of her death."

"My keenest accuser is here, Ellen," said he, pointing to his breast. "Do not suppose that the voice is still, if I never again speak on this subject. She rests there in her lonely grave; but her memory will live in her son's heart, wild and wicked as it is. Come—you are not strong enough to bear all this fatigue."

Ellen added a stone to the cairn, and they re-entered the dungeon.

A torch had been stuck into one of the iron rings, to give them light across the vault. Reginald left it to burn itself out, as there was nothing to catch fire in the place, and wrapped his companion tenderly round in the fur rug, preparatory to carrying her up the stairs.

"No, no," she said, trying to resist, "I will not be carried, Reginald! I will walk."

"The stairs are so broken and steep that you would fall at every step," he replied, coolly taking her up; "and there is not room for me to keep beside you. You must submit to necessity, though perhaps it prevents your feeling very much like my *governess*."

"I already feel that that position is given up from necessity," said Ellen, stung by the tone of irony in which he uttered the last

word; "and very soon it must be entirely abandoned."

There was a furious involuntary contraction of the muscles of his arms, and a grinding of his set teeth, but it was only momentary. He subdued the passion, and said calmly, "We will talk about that to-morrow."

At the door of her room he set her down, thanked her, blessed her in a hurried choking voice, kissed both her hands with tender affection, and stalked away down the long passage.

Ellen was glad to seek the repose of her own bed; and notwithstanding the strange scenes through which she had just passed, she was so wearied that she sank at once into a deep slumber. Mrs. Sweetman was sound asleep on the sofa, and an empty tumbler on the table showed that she had taken the precaution of "soothing her nerves" before composing herself to rest.

CHAPTER XII.

LOVE AND LEARNING.

THE following morning Mr. Hawkshawe was somewhat surprised at receiving a message from his son, requesting his presence in the library.

They had not met since the fatal day of the accident; and so painfully vivid was that scene before his mental vision, and so little did he relish the idea of being exposed in a *tête-à-tête* to the young man's ungovernable temper, that he took the precaution of putting a loaded pistol into his pocket, before complying with the summons.

On entering the library, the first glance entirely dispelled all his apprehensions.

With his arms folded thoughtfully across his breast, Reginald was slowly pacing up and down the room. Hector lay upon the hearth-rug; but sympathizing with his master's altered mood, did not even utter a growl at the approach of his old enemy.

Mr. Hawkshawe's surprise was increased when Reginald deferentially placed a chair for him, and, opening the window, dismissed the dog into the garden.

"I wish to consult you, sir, about my studies," Reginald began, without a moment's hesitation, as he turned from the window. "It is ridiculous for me any longer to learn of a girl, clever as she is, and much as I love her."

"I am delighted to hear you speak so rationally," replied his father; "but for the present," he added, with considerable hesitation of manner, "it is very much against my wish that Miss Maynard should quit my house."

"May I ask your reasons, sir?" said Reginald, sitting down opposite to his father, and looking steadfastly, almost sternly, in his face.

"My reasons—my reasons are immaterial in the question now pending," stammered Mr. Hawkshawe; "at least, they do not concern you, and I imagine I am not accountable for either my motives or my actions, to my own son."

"Certainly not, sir," replied Reginald, coolly, "excepting in as far as they affect Miss Maynard, in whom I have, of course, a stronger interest than you can possibly feel."

Mr. Hawkshawe compressed his lips, and his cheeks turned white with anger. What made matters worse, was that he knew his son was watching him with those calm black eyes, in all the dignity of his newly-acquired self-control.

At length throwing off his temporary

embarrassment, he said, "Let us continue the subject on which you desired to consult me, Reginald. Do you wish to go to college?"

"No, sir; decidedly no," said the young man, firmly. "Miss Maynard has taught me enough to enable me to see how little I know. I should cut a silly figure, I am aware, among any set of young men of even tolerable education, and I fear my temper would not stand the ridicule I should meet with. Besides which, I know I can make greater progress under another system. I wish Dr. Gibson to come for several hours every day, as he did before, but for a longer time. I will continue to learn music of Ellen—Miss Maynard, I mean—and to read with her."

"I think your plan a very good one," said the elder gentleman; "that is, if you can adhere to it."

"Do not fear that, sir," said Reginald.

"As it meets your approval I should like to put it in action without delay. Will you go to Dr. Gibson this morning, or shall I?"

"*This morning!*" repeated Mr. Hawkshawe. "You have formed your resolution very quickly, and you seem determined to commence carrying it out with the same haste."

"I feel that I have no time to lose, sir," said his son; "besides, promptitude and decision belong to our family, I believe."

"I will go then, at once, to Dr. Gibson," said his father; "but *his* wishes have to be consulted, as well as ours."

"He'll come," said Reginald, confidently. "Tell him he will have nothing now to fear from my hasty temper."

"Upon whose assurance can I tell him that?" asked his father, with a slight sneer.

"I think, sir, you may speak from experience," replied the young man, with perfect equanimity; and his father felt that he

might; for three days before he would not have ventured to say one of the annoying and sarcastic things that Reginald had to-day taken so calmly.

"Well then, I will go to him," said Mr. Hawkshawe, rising, "and ask him to come, I suppose, to-morrow morning."

"This afternoon if he can," said Reginald; "he cannot come too soon."

"I will tell him your wish," said his father. "By the bye," he added, turning at the door, which, to his utter amazement, Reginald had respectfully opened, "have you heard how Miss Maynard is this morning?"

"She is much better, sir, thank you," replied Reginald.

Acknowledging the answer by a slight inclination of the head, Mr. Hawkshawe passed out.

"Impertinent puppy !" he muttered, as he strode impatiently across the hall ;

“why should he thank me for inquiring after Ellen’s health? And by what right has he a stronger interest in her than I have? I must get him off to collége. And yet, in that case, what excuse should I have for detaining her? No—there can be no danger in letting them be together. She must dislike and fear him for the violence that put her life in peril. Yet what a change has come over him! I cannot understand him, nor myself. I have attained what was my most ardent wish, and yet I am not satisfied!”

As soon as Reginald was alone, he sat down to the piano, and practised diligently for an hour or two. So absorbed was he in his exercises that he did not observe Ellen enter the room. Rising at length to admit Hector, whose impatient whining had attracted his notice, he saw his fair monitress sitting in an easy-chair, reading.

“Ellen!” he exclaimed, kneeling on one

knee at her feet, and possessing himself of her hand, which he covered with kisses, "how long have you been here?"

"About half an hour," she replied, "and I was glad to hear you practising so diligently. If you go on so you will soon play well."

"I mean to work hard at everything," he said, "I have had a consultation with my father this morning, and he has gone to ask Dr. Gibson to come again as he used to do."

"Do you think Dr. Gibson will venture to become your instructor again, Reginald?" asked Ellen. "From what you have told me of your conduct towards him, and what I have heard from others, I should imagine he would be too fearful of your violent temper, to come willingly within range of it."

"Oh! Ellen! Ellen!" he said, bowing his face upon her knee, "can I ever again give

way to a fit of rage? This dear wounded arm, and that other—which I dare not speak of—are these not sufficient to make me control my temper?”

“Sufficient to make you strive earnestly to do so, at least,” said Ellen; “but *really* to control it, after long indulgence, is one of the most difficult things to accomplish.”

“I have gone through one trial already, with my father,” said Reginald, “and I found it easy enough. It was amusing, though; he looked so astonished.”

“No doubt he did,” said Ellen; “now let Hector in, or he will break the window.”

“There is one thing, Ellen, that I will not stand upon any terms,” said Reginald, impatiently.

“What is that?” she asked.

“You must not treat me as a child in one respect, and not in another, just as it suits your own purpose,” he replied.

"I don't understand you," said Ellen.
"I cannot treat you as a child."

"You *do*," he said, "so it seems that you can. You tell me to let the dog in, as if I were a child, and could not discover that your real reason is that you do not like a man to press this little smooth soft hand between his own great rough ones, thus; nor lay his bearded face upon your lap, in this fashion. Now, Ellen, before I let go this hand, or raise my head, tell me how old you are? You are no longer my governess, you know, and I am no longer a boy."

"I am perfectly aware of both those facts," she replied; "I am twenty years old."

"And I," said he, "I am two-and-twenty! Perhaps I ought to be ashamed of this, as I am so ignorant. But I am not, Ellen. I am pleased at being older than you, and the ignorance shall quickly be got rid of."

"I shall always be glad to hear of your progress," said Ellen. "I have no doubt Dr. Gibson, or his sister, will write frequently to me."

"So you think you are going to make your escape, my lady fair?" said Reginald, with a faint smile. "No, no, Ellen, you must not go," he added, gravely; "without you I can do nothing. *You must not leave your work half finished.*"

As he said this, he rose and let in the dog.

"We *must* come to an understanding," said Ellen, after a pause. "You must be made to comprehend how much I shall suffer in the estimation of the world—of every one who hears of it—by living here any longer. I appeal to your generosity, Reginald—to your justice."

"If it depended only upon me, Ellen, I could not refuse you," said the young man. "I would rather know that you were happy

though away from me, than keep you here to fret in what you feel to be a sort of captivity. But it does not depend upon me. My father will not let you go."

Ellen's eyes filled with tears at his generous disinterestedness.

"There—there—comfort yourself!" he continued, wiping away her tears. "I will try to persuade my father to release you from your engagement. You shall never be unhappy, dear Ellen, while I can do anything to cheer you, even though your happiness depends upon your being relieved from my presence."

"You mistake me, Reginald," she said; "it is not that; it is from a feeling of propriety——"

"Well, well," he said, interrupting her, "never mind the explanation. You wish it—that is enough; and if possible I will get it done; but I cannot give you much hope, for my father spoke very positively

about it this morning. Now let me read to you till dinner-time."

"Poor Reginald!" thought Ellen—"dear Reginald! He speaks of *my* hopes, not of his own! Am I too selfish in desiring to leave him?—oh, Frank, it is for your sake!"

"Have you any objection to my reading the newspaper to you, Ellen?" asked Reginald, unfolding the *Times*. "I know so little of what goes on in the world, that if I went among strangers I should seem as though I had dropped down from the moon. I may learn from Dr. Gibson and from books all that happened long ago, but I fancy it must be quite as important to know what is happening at the present time."

"Certainly it is," she replied; "and I shall be very glad to hear you; for I have scarcely seen a paper since I came here, and therefore I know as little as yourself of what is passing in the world."

Reginald read the leading articles one by

one, with many pauses for explanation, where his acquaintance with dates, persons, events and geography, was not sufficient to enable him fully to understand the meaning of what he read. It was shortly before the declaration of war with Russia, and the imminence of that event was treated of with the utmost confidence. Ellen's heart beat fast with many anxious feelings as he went on.

"*If* there is war," was her natural reflection, "what regiments will be sent out? Will Frank go?"

Reginald also felt deeply interested, for he exclaimed, "I wish I were a soldier!—but even soldiers, at least officers, must know a great deal more than I do! Oh, Ellen, how I regret having thrown away the opportunity of learning, when first I came to this house! If I had studied then, I might now have been able to be a soldier. It is worth while to be one, now that there

is real fighting! Ah! here they tell us what regiments are ordered to be placed on a war footing. Happy fellows! I wish I were one of you!"

He read on. But at the mention of one regiment Ellen, being still weak and nervous from her wound, screamed and fainted. Mrs. Sweetman was speedily in attendance, and the young lady was restored. Reginald said nothing about the cause of her illness, not even to herself, but he made a note of the regiment the name of which had so affected her.

In the afternoon Dr. Gibson arrived.

Ellen felt slightly indisposed, but she exerted herself to give a cordial welcome to the good old man, whose society she had always wished to cultivate from the first time she heard him preach, but from which she had been debarred by Reginald's furious conduct towards him, which had prevented his coming near the house until the present

time. Ellen was aware that although a sense of duty might oblige him to undertake the education of the young savage when called upon to do so, yet he must feel somewhat uneasy on first entering the lion's den; and she wished by her own manner to reassure him.

The matter was settled at once, however, and in a much easier way, by Reginald himself. Stepping up to the doctor, he held out his hand, and frankly and modestly asked his pardon for his former rudeness; then looked at Ellen for the approving smile with which he knew she would reward him. The smile was ready for him, and much warmer and kinder than she would have suffered it to be, had she been less taken by surprise. The old clergyman was quite overpowered; but that quickly passed, and his impatient pupil commenced his studies.

It is needless to follow Reginald in his labours further than to say that he worked

with so much industry and will, that he accomplished in a day more than many learn in a week or a month. Besides the hours he spent with his tutor, he practised the piano assiduously, and studied by himself till after midnight, rising again after three or four hours' sleep, to resume his preparations for the day's work. In addition to all this he never once omitted reading the *Times* aloud to Ellen. Still, not a word did he utter about her fainting at the name of a certain regiment, nor was that regiment mentioned again in the papers for some weeks.

Ellen showed a feverish interest in all that concerned the war and the movements of the army, and Reginald was equally anxious to read every word to her. His indignation knew no bounds against those degenerate sons—surely not of England, but of some chance denizens of the land—who sold their commissions rather than face the enemy.

Ellen joined in his feelings, but timidly and nervously, not that she feared that Frank Willoughby would be a craven, but "he was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow," and she feared lest his mother should so value his life above his honour, as to induce him to yield to her tears and entreaties. Reginald observed that she checked and qualified her condemnation of these unhappy creatures, and he controlled the ebullition of his own wrath, divining why she did so, and careful not to pain her. But he thought in his own proud heart, "If I were her lover, she would have no fear of hitting me a chance blow, while heaping contempt on these poltroons! I would not change places with him, even to have her love; for she mistrusts him. She could feel for me a higher love than that, if she once began to love me!"

Then she made excuses for them, and said perhaps they were good sons, and their mothers would break their hearts if they

went into battle; perhaps there were some of them only sons of widows; and he drew the inference that all this was said for the sake of one who *was* a widow's only son. And Reginald felt pleased at his discovery, though he still kept it to himself.

Meantime his brown cheek became hollow and sallow through want of sleep and outdoor exercise, and from the closeness of his studies.

"Never mind!" he said, when Ellen remonstrated with him, "I am strong enough to bear much more than this. A few days among the hills will make all right again; and I *must* get on fast, for I have an object to gain."

What that object was, Reginald would not confess, though he always pleaded it as a reason for sacrificing every other consideration to the vigorous prosecution of his studies. Dr. Gibson was amazed at his progress. Mr. Hawkshawe was delighted,

yet inclined to give all the credit to Ellen, who had first given the impetus to her pupil's vigorous intellect. She was delighted too, and not averse to receive her share of the praise, for she knew how hard she had toiled to awaken in him a desire for knowledge for its own sake.

Reginald alone seemed to feel no pleasure in his own progress, except sometimes when Ellen praised him. He worked on with steady determination, yet with no apparent enjoyment, and she knew that unless when his mind was thus occupied he was for ever brooding on the death of his mother, and his own share in it. She even doubted whether the idea was not always present to his mind, though in a latent condition; hardly as a thought, but as a dim feeling, like pain that is felt in sleep.

In the concentration of deep study, and probably hereafter in the occupations of active life, lay the surest remedy for this

gnawing sorrow, which he must always feel with more or less acuteness; and she wisely encouraged him in his labours, and resolved to say nothing about her departure till the term of her agreement had expired.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW ELLEN'S LETTERS WENT ASTRAY.

ANXIETIES of her own now began to press heavily upon Ellen.

There had been no special mention of Frank Willoughby's name from the seat of war, nor had the name of every renegade officer been gibbeted for public execration.

Meantime the Crimean war had commenced in good earnest, and the first news of him might be in the list of slain; or from some private source she might learn that he had become unworthy of the love of any true-born English girl.

If this were the case, Ellen would probably find apologies for him in his mother's

weak and anxious love; she would pity him; she would not confess to despising him; but she would not marry him.

In the midst of her anxious ruminations she suddenly recollected her determination, made on the night after she was wounded, to write again to Mr. Smedley, and to drop the letter in the village on her way from church, which was the only occasion on which she could ever get so far towards the post-office. This plan she carried into execution on the following Sunday, and an epistle, containing the fullest local information that she could give, was written to the good doctor. This she placed behind a tombstone as she passed, under the watchful escort of Mr. Hawkshawe, from the church door to the carriage.

In the afternoon, while she was indulging in fond dreams of what *might* happen in consequence of the safe arrival of that letter at its destination, the library door was

burst open, and Reginald entered hastily. His face was flushed, and his eyes glowing with suppressed anger. He shut the door more gently than he had opened it, but it required an effort to keep him from slamming it. He leaned upon the mantel-piece, grinding his heel into the rug, and gnawing his "nether lip," while he looked at Ellen, but did not trust himself to speak.

Ellen saw that he was struggling for mastery over the passion that possessed him like a demon; and going quietly to the piano, she played some music of a soothing and tender character, adding as much as possible to its plaintiveness by the manner of performing. Reginald came to her side after a while, but she went on without noticing him. At length his murmured thanks fell upon her ear, and then she knew that he had overcome his hitherto invincible enemy, and could trust himself to speak. She was anxious to know what

had moved him so deeply, yet would not risk awakening the demon again by asking any questions. She paused, but only as if to look out another piece of music.

"Why don't you ask what has made me so angry?" said Reginald.

"Because if it is anything that you wish me to know, you will tell me without being asked," she replied, turning from the piano.

"I thought women were always inquisitive," said Reginald.

"Not all women, I hope," said Ellen; "but without being inquisitive, I may feel a lively interest in whatever affects my friends. I am *very* anxious to know what has vexed you, but I have no right to pry into what does not concern me."

"It does concern you," he replied, his brow growing black again. "You dropped a letter in the churchyard this morning. Was that done on purpose?"

"Did your father see it?" cried Ellen, in alarm.

"In heaven's name! why should he *not* see it?" exclaimed Reginald, impetuously. "Why should you use any subterfuge to get your letters posted? Would they not go safely in the bag with the rest?"

"Do not accuse me of entertaining unfounded suspicions till you know all the facts of the case," said Ellen. "I have written twice to a friend since I came here, and have had no answer to either of my letters. Without being very suspicious, what can I imagine but that my letters have been intercepted, especially when I recollect that your father, in our first interview, appeared excessively anxious about my correspondents?"

"I don't accuse you of being suspicious, my dear girl," said Reginald; "the only fault I find with you is that you did not trust your letters to me to be posted. If

you will write another I'll undertake that it shall be delivered by hand, and an answer brought back, as fast as the mail train can go, and horses' feet scamper."

"You have not told me what has become of the other," said Ellen. "Did your father see me drop it?"

"No," replied Reginald; "I'll tell you all about it. I went to Mr. Hawkshawe's room just now to give him a list of the books that I want from London; and while I was there, the postmaster came in with a letter, which he said had been picked up in the churchyard by the sexton, and which he thought was in the hand-writing that '*his honour*' had ordered him to bring to him, and it was also directed the same as the others, to Mr. Smedley. All this he blurted out without seeing me, and before *his honour* could stop his tongue, I saw that the address on the letter was in your hand, and I tried to get possession of it, but my—No!—I'll

never call him father again!—he—Mr. Hawkshawe threw it into the fire. I tell you, Ellen, that even the terrible consequences of my last explosion of rage could scarcely enable me to command myself. I would not trust myself to speak or look at him, so I came away. And now do you wonder that I was angry?”

“My greatest wonder is that being so angry, you had power to control your anger,” said Ellen.

“I *must* do that, Ellen,” he said, with a sigh so deep that it was almost a groan. “Think what I have already done in a fit of rage! That thought is always with me, and I will bite out my tongue, and strike off my right hand before I burden my memory with another such reflection.”

“You have already done yourself some mischief!” she cried, as a drop of blood trickled from his beard. “Oh! Reginald! what *have* you done?”

"It is only my lip," he replied, quietly. "I bit it to help in keeping down my anger."

"You have bitten it almost through!" she said, wiping the blood away with her handkerchief, while her eyes filled with tears.

Reginald smiled with delight when he saw her tears. The smile opened the wound afresh, and it bled fast.

"Why do you smile?" said she. "Keep your mouth quiet, or the bleeding will not stop."

"I am smiling at your tears," he answered, fondly, "and I would kiss them off your cheeks, but that in doing so I should smear them with this nasty dirty red stuff. Here—give me that handkerchief,—let me throw it into the fire".

"No—no," cried she, holding it back, when he tried to snatch it, "a few drops of blood are easily washed off. Besides, I want the clean part to wipe my eyes."

He threw himself into an easy chair, crossed his legs, and gazed thoughtfully into the fire for some minutes, mechanically compressing his lacerated lip with his own handkerchief in the meanwhile. And Ellen felt that in some unaccountable way their relative positions had undergone a further change. How was it, she thought, that every incident, great or small, seemed to give him an increased ascendancy over her? While she was trying to solve this enigma, Reginald's voice interrupted her, speaking in low, sad tones.

"Write another letter, Ellen," he said, "and it shall go safely. You will write freely, and as your heart dictates, will you not; and feel quite sure that it will go securely through my hands, and be as sacred as my own honour?"

"Indeed, I shall, Reginald," she replied, looking trustingly into his eyes. "Why do you for a moment imagine that I should doubt you?"

"You have every right to doubt me," he said, bitterly. "Like father, like son, they say. Were the other letters you mentioned addressed to the same person?"

"Yes," replied Ellen.

"And those he may have opened and read!" exclaimed Reginald, writhing as if in bodily pain. "All the unrestrained expressions of your fond heart (for I know you *can* be fond, Ellen!)—all the tender words meant for but one eye in all this world, *he* may have gloated over!"

This speech enlightened her upon two points—first, that Reginald believed that her letters had been written to her lover; and secondly, that he thought his father was in love with her. Some unpleasant surmises on this latter question had for some time past forced themselves upon her own mind.

"And he would send my letters to a supposed rival!" she mentally exclaimed.

"He is indeed generous!—Magnanimous! I must undeceive him—but how shall I do it?"

"Smedley!" said Reginald, musingly, after a pause of some five minutes' duration, "Smedley! It is not a very good name, is it, Ellen—not so good as the one you already bear?"

"It belongs to a very good man, though," said she; "he is one of the pleasantest, kindest old gentlemen I ever met with."

"*Old!*" exclaimed Reginald, starting up. "You are not going to marry an *old* man?"

"I am not going to marry any one yet," she replied, laughing: "and least of all, Mr. Smedley."

"What a fool I am!" cried Reginald, laughing also, as he subsided into his chair again. "I could not imagine you writing to any one but your lover. Who, then, is this Mr. Smedley, if I may ask?"

"He is the doctor who attended my

father during his last illness," replied Ellen, relapsing into the gravity that was usual with her, "and he is besides the only friend who remained unchanged when it was known that I was left poor instead of rich."

"The *only* friend?" repeated Reginald, inquiringly. "I wish you would tell me frankly all about it. I don't ask from mere curiosity. Was there not *one* other friend who would not desert you?"

"I understand whom you mean," said Ellen, hesitating and blushing; "he was abroad, and knew nothing about it."

"And his friends—his family—were they abroad too?" he continued.

"He has only his mother," she replied; "no other near relatives."

"Did she turn the cold shoulder on you in your adversity?" he inquired.

"Do not press these questions on me, Reginald!" cried Ellen, bursting into tears.

"I'll ask you no more, my dear girl—I

know enough now," said Reginald; and he began to walk thoughtfully up and down the room—a habit which he had acquired since he became studious.

After a few turns the young man stopped, raised Ellen's face by putting his hand under her chin, looked at her steadily for a minute or two, then gravely kissed her on the forehead, and bade her write her letter quickly, for he wanted her to play to him.

"By the by," said Reginald, as Ellen was folding the letter, "you had better tell him to enclose his answer under cover to Dr. Gibson. Mr. Hawkshawe might think proper to detain it."

"Dr. Gibson would think it strange, not knowing all the circumstances," said Ellen.

"Then bid him enclose it in another envelope directed to John Lynch, blacksmith, St. Mawes," said Reginald, "and add, that you have reason to suspect that your letters have been tampered with in the

post-office here, that is—unless you have already told him——”

“I have told him nothing that might bring disgrace upon a name which *you*, I am sure, will make honourably known,” replied Ellen.

“Thank you, dearest, thank you for those kind words,” said Reginald.

“Mr. Smedley will wonder at my taking a blacksmith into my confidence,” said Ellen; “how shall I account for that?”

“Just leave him to think what he likes,” replied Reginald; “he will probably imagine that he is a friend of one of the servants. You may be sure he will suppose nothing wrong of you.”

“But who is John Lynch?” she asked, as she sealed the letter.

“A friend of mine,” said Reginald; “indeed, a distant relation.”

Ellen stared at him with astonishment. He replied by a look into which he threw

so much of the gipsy character that she blushed at her own obtuseness. He smiled as he took the letter from her, and then handed her to the piano.

Mr. Hawkshawe did not make his appearance that evening, and for several days Ellen saw nothing of him. She had determined to avoid letting him know that Reginald had acquainted her with his dishonourable conduct respecting her letters, and had even persuaded the young man himself to forbear any allusion to the subject when he saw his father. Consequently when, towards the end of the week, she accidentally encountered Mr. Hawkshawe, there was nothing in her manner to lead him to suppose she was aware that he had tampered with her correspondence. "Humph," he soliloquised, "I am glad to see that Reginald has so much family pride."

By return of post Ellen received, under

cover to John Lynch, a long letter from Mr. Smedley, expressing the liveliest satisfaction at hearing of her well-being, and letting her off, for that once only, as he emphatically declared, without the sharp lecture he had mentally prepared for her any day these six months, upon the sin of dilatoriness in writing letters to old friends.

"The fact is, my dear young lady," he concluded, "I have been exceedingly uneasy about you, especially since I learned from Mrs. Mason (to whom—shall I confess it?—I made a purpose journey) the extraordinary manner in which you had been carried off. I am indeed thankful to hear of your safety. * * *

"You ask news of myself. What news could there be worth telling of a frowsy old bachelor, always busy tinkering up his fellow-mortals? I am not married; that is all I can say about myself, but many of your acquaintances are." Here he gave

a page or two to the gossip of the neighbourhood. "I am rather busy just now," he continued, in a postscript written across one corner, "which must be my excuse for sending you such a disconnected letter. The public health is good, but my best patient, Lady Willoughby, is suffering from *nerves*, in consequence of her son's determination to stick to his colours and his regiment, and go out with them to Turkey, instead of coming home at his mammy's bidding, like a good boy; or rather, as I often long to tell her ladyship, like a whipped cur with his tail between his legs. I try my best to convince her that he has taken the only right and honourable course; and when I find it all in vain, I pocket my fee, and send her a soothing draught. Captain W. writes in high spirits. He reports himself in prime health, and delighted with camp life. All which ought to satisfy any mother, unless she were a fool."

“She has news of him,” thought Reginald, who had watched Ellen, over his book, while she read this letter. “He remains with his regiment! I see it in her pale cheek, in her full bright eye, in the proud curl of her lip, in her arching neck, in her expanded chest, in the deep sigh that struggles painfully from it. Yes—he remains with his regiment. Good—now I must discover his name.”

CHAPTER XIV.

REGINALD LOSES FAITH IN HIS TUTOR.—
A VISIT TO THE HERMITAGE.

DURING some months Reginald's energies never relaxed for a single hour, with the exception of the very few which he allotted to sleep. Incessant study—unwearied labour.

Change of occupation was the only respite he allowed himself. When not engaged with Dr. Gibson, he was studying music and modern languages with Ellen; and for hours after she was gone to bed, and before she appeared at breakfast, as well as at every spare minute before and after meals, he was pursuing a course of reading on a plan of his own.

One afternoon Reginald was so absorbed in the perusal of a book, that he did not observe the entrance of his tutor. The old gentleman looked over his shoulder, and started back aghast.

"My dear young friend!" he exclaimed, "what book are you reading?"

"Carlyle's 'Hero-Worship,'" replied Reginald, looking up with a face glowing with animation and delight—"is it not a glorious work?"

"I am grieved," said the good old clergyman, shaking his head, "deeply grieved to see that your young mind is captivated and entangled in that network of false philosophy and immorality."

"*Immorality!*" repeated Reginald. "I think, sir, you have mistaken the book. I am near the end, and not one sentence have I read that is not full of the highest, and deepest, and widest morality."

"When I speak of its immoral tendency,"

said Dr. Gibson, "I mean that it is irreligious."

"There again you are wrong, sir," persisted Reginald, firmly but respectfully; "for I never felt a religious sentiment till I read this work. I should say the writer was a most religious man."

"He may be—he may be in one sense," said Dr. Gibson; "that is, he may perhaps have a vague, undefined sort of religious feeling, what is called natural religion; but he scoffs at revealed religion."

"Pardon me, sir," said Reginald—"in *this* book, at least, he scoffs at no religion, but holds all creeds that are truly believed in to be worthy of respect even by those who have no faith in them."

"That is the very point I am trying to impress upon you," said the old gentleman, with vivacity. "A man who professes to reverence every creed under the sun, can have no fixed faith of his own. Why, the

very name of that book is enough. 'Hero-Worship!' What can be the religion of that man who would worship mere heroes? Worship is due to *One* alone!"

"I understood you to say *three* the other day, sir," observed Reginald, with quiet malice; but seeing Ellen shake her head reprovingly, he added, before the old gentleman had time to snatch up his weapons in defence of the Trinity, "have you read this book, sir?"

"God forbid that a man of my cloth should find no better use for his time on earth than in reading atheistical books!" replied the old gentleman.

"In that case, sir," said Reginald, mastering with an effort a feeling of contempt that strove to find expression on his fine face, "in that case I must humbly submit that we have wasted time in speaking on a subject with which *one* of us is confessedly unacquainted."

"Nay, young man," said the clergyman, assuming an air of dignity, "we may be acquainted with the tendency of a writer without having read all his works."

"Have you read *any one* of his books fairly and honestly through?" inquired Reginald.

"I have read extracts, and feel no inclination to read more," replied Dr. Gibson.

"Then, sir, I should very much like you to read what he says here of Martin Luther," continued Reginald.

"Not I, indeed," replied Dr. Gibson, shaking his head portentously, and waving his hand with a magisterial air; "I hope to turn my talent to better account than that. Why, the man cannot even write English! He not unfrequently concludes a member of a sentence, or even a sentence itself, with a preposition!—And as for the degrees of comparison, all the profound

grammarians who have enriched our language with the results of their wisdom and industry might as well have never existed, if this Mr. Carlyle is to be set up as a model for imitation."

"I cannot dispute what you say, sir," said Reginald; and he was about to add some other remark, slyly to provoke the old gentleman, when Ellen, who had been listening attentively, while her fingers were employed on some bit of ornamental needle-work, and who had been watching for an opportunity to break off an unprofitable discussion, suddenly uttered a little scream.

It had the desired effect. Reginald flew to her side to see what was the matter,—it was only a wasp that had threatened to settle on her hand; but the wasp had to be pursued, and ruthlessly killed; and by the time that was accomplished, she had put the bone of contention out of sight, and spread the table with Latin books, and treatises

on mathematics, algebra, and geometry, enough to fully occupy any two human minds.

When the lesson was ended, and the doctor gone, Reginald, instead of plunging into a book, as was his usual habit, began to walk up and down the room.

"I wonder what is coming," thought Ellen, who knew his movements, and could read them as a pilot does the signs of the weather; "he is making up his mind about something, I can see. He will come and tell me presently what it is;—something about Dr. Gibson, I feel certain."

She was right in her conjecture. After a lengthened promenade he placed a chair resolutely before her with the back towards her, sat down crossways, with his chin resting on his hands and his elbows on the chair back, and said, "Ellen!"

"Yes, Reginald," she replied, quietly, looking up from her book.

"What's to be the next move?" he inquired.

"How can I tell?" she replied—"unless it be check to the bishop?"

"Something of that sort, I believe, it must be," said he. "I have lost faith in Dr. Gibson. He is a bigot."

"I fear he is over-hasty in his judgments," replied Ellen. "I have been reading the book which he condemned so summarily, and I must confess it seems to me to breathe a religion truly catholic. The author finds that there was something true, something consequently to have faith in, even in the old Scandinavian mythology. I like that universal, tolerant spirit; it is so much more Christian than a too close adhesion to the tenets of the particular sect in which one happens to have been brought up."

"And you are the daughter of a clergyman of the Established Church who say this!" exclaimed Reginald.

"Among my father's friends," she replied, "were a Roman Catholic priest, a Unitarian minister, a Baptist minister, and a Scottish Presbyterian preacher of the John Knox stamp; and all these used to meet beneath our roof in perfect amity."

"When I go to London," said Reginald, with a provoking twist of his mouth, "I will look out for the Happy Family, and then I shall be able to form some idea of the state of things you describe. And now to return to the question under immediate discussion:—It is quite plain to me that I have done with Dr. Gibson, for I have lost confidence in him. What shall I do next, my sweet friend?"

"I think you might now go to college with advantage," said Ellen.

"True; I might," he replied. "But first I shall go to London."

"Oh, Reginald!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands in an attitude of entreaty, "will you take me with you?"

"Take you with me!" he repeated, in amazement. "My dear girl! that is an extraordinary request."

"I only want your protection as far as the railway station," she answered, blushing deeply; "the fact is, I fear your father will not let me go unless you insist upon it, and see it done."

"No; wait till I return," said Reginald. "You will be safe here till then. And yet," he added, seeing her look uneasy, "if you would feel the happier for knowing that you can get away in case of need, I will show you a way of escape, on condition that you will not use it except in the extremest necessity. Do you promise that?"

"I do promise," she replied.

"Then come along," said Reginald, and he led her out into the garden.

This garden, it may be remembered, was sheltered from the sea-breezes by a wall of rock, partly concealed by a grove of trees.

In the centre of it was a smooth, well-kept lawn, tastefully dotted with flower-beds, now in their full glory under a July sun. A small stream, fed from a neighbouring hill, fell over a rock on the side farthest from the sea and the house, and after a winding and rapid course through lawn and shrubbery, rushed with considerable force through a narrow fissure in the cliff-wall before mentioned, and so escaped to the ocean. No one would dream of entering the fissure along with the stream, for the current, suddenly reduced to so narrow a channel, seemed strong enough to carry a stout man off his legs.

“Do you see any way of escape here?” asked her conductor, when they reached the spot where the stream widened considerably in consequence of the check given to it by the subsequent narrowing of its channel.

“No, indeed I do not,” said Ellen, look-

ing up the face of the rock, where alone she thought any outlet could be found.

"You look too high," he said. "You will have to wet your feet before you get out."

"You do not mean that I shall have to go into that dreadful hole!" cried Ellen, drawing back with a shudder.

"Indeed but I do," he replied.

"It is impossible!" she said. "I should be swept away by the water, and perhaps dashed down a precipice. It is a mere mockery to talk of escaping in this direction."

"Nevertheless," said Reginald, "if escape be ever desperately necessary, this is the only practicable way."

"Why should I not get out of the house at night?" asked Ellen.

"Because the outer gate is locked every night, and the key taken to my father," replied Reginald. "Nay, so jealous has he

become of late, that I understand he locks it with his own hand lest the servants should deceive him."

"The dungeons!" suggested Ellen, feeling as if the meshes of a net were gradually closing around her. "Could I not escape by the way you took me on *that* night?"

Reginald shook his head.

"Shortly after that time," he said, "the door near the library was strongly secured. I think he had some suspicion that you meditated giving him the slip."

Ellen looked around her with frightened eyes. Even the smooth, inaccessible face of the rock seemed more auspicious than that dismal chasm. Reginald, in the meanwhile, had bared his feet, and turned his trousers up to his knees.

"Come," said he, lifting her in his arms, "you shall go through dry-shod this time, and if you should ever be compelled to come by yourself—which I do not in the least

believe will be the case, or I should see you safe off before I left the house—you will not find the exploit so very difficult. The bottom is firm and level, and by holding on to the sides, there is very little danger of slipping. Above all, you must not be in a hurry. Feel your footing, and get a firm hand-grip, and you will do well.

The passage indeed seemed easy enough, for while he spoke, he landed her high and dry in a cavern of some extent, and tolerably lighted from another fissure in the rock, which was so placed as not to be visible from the outside.

Ellen looked round her in astonishment. The little stream, after some murmuring at the entrance, stole quietly along one side of the cave, and disappeared within a recess formed by a projection of the rock. The floor on which she stood was level, dry, and sandy; the air was fresh and pure, but not chilly. But the objects that most vividly

struck her attention were those that marked the place as having served for a human habitation. There was a block of stone, squared by art, and of the height and size to serve for a table, and beside it a long bench cut out of the wall; the seat, it might have been, and the bed of an anchorite, in some distant time, when the neighbouring mansion was in reality, as it still was in name, a priory. She was brought to this conclusion by the remaining monuments of man's art,—a small altar, also chiselled from the solid rock; and above it, carved in relief on the smooth surface of the wall, just where the light from the ivy-mantled aperture fell strongest, a cross, with the Divine Image upon it. The sculpture was rude, but it was easy to perceive that a rapt soul had vividly conceived what the untutored hand had striven, not quite unsuccessfully, to represent.

“I think,” said Ellen, after a long con-

templation of this object, "that our early reformers were over-zealous in banishing such images as this from our churches. And yet it was doubtless well and wisely done; since it would be difficult to distinguish between a production of mere art, and one that, like this, was the work of inspiration. Oh, Reginald! Does not this solemn, this awful figure, by raising your thoughts to the Divine original, induce you to believe—to tremble, and to pray?"

"My poor mother used often to kneel and pray here," he said, looking sadly down on the step of the altar where the knees of the anchorite had worn two hollows in the stone, "for she was born a Spaniard—a Spanish gipsy—and was a Catholic, if anything. For myself, dear Ellen, we must wait, and see what I shall be. I cannot believe by an act of the will, any more than you can love, or I cease to love by an act of the will. There—there—don't be frightened,"

he added, soothingly, seeing that she looked startled at the mention of the word love. "I am not such a rascal as to bring you to this lonely place to talk perforce on the forbidden subject. I brought you here to show you how to make your escape, if it should ever be absolutely necessary for you to do so. Look here! It appears quite impossible to follow the course of the stream any farther, but behind this rock, you may see, or rather feel, for it is almost dark, there are some rough and steep steps. Give me your hand. There—now you have climbed to the top of this rock, you can discover those other steps skirting along the bed of the current. Be careful of your footing, for a slip here would be fatal. Now you perceive we come to the edge of the cliff, overlooking the beach and the sea."

"It was needless to exact from me a promise to use this way of escape only in a desperate extremity," said Ellen, looking in

terror on the precipice beneath. "I might as well fling myself down at once as attempt to descend by any path that we see here."

"You are like our good doctor," replied Reginald, "too hasty in jumping to a conclusion. There is a path, though a dangerous and difficult one. Yet you may contrive to tread it safely now, with my help, and before I go I will have a rope fixed up, so that you can steady your steps by it, should you be obliged to come here alone. The first time I descended these cliffs was in my poor mother's arms. I remember it distinctly, though I was but four years old. We went out to sea in a boat, and were taken on board a ship which conveyed us to Spain. There we lived for several years, which is one reason why I spoke so little English when you came first. We lived amongst mountains and wild places, and I learnt nothing but how to shoot, and ride, and leap, and run. My

mother loved me, but she loved revenge more, and she trained me to look well enough outside, but to be at heart a mere savage brute; and in this state she meant to present me to my father, as the lawful heir to his name and estates. It was a cruel revenge for some angry words he had used to her, reflecting on her gipsy birth, which he should have thought of well before he married her, but never afterwards. If she had carried out her purpose to its fullest extent, her revenge would have been horrible, for it would have fallen most heavily on an innocent victim. You may smile, if you like, at my applying that term to myself, Miss Ellen; but observe that I am speaking of the child that I *was*, not of the man that I *am*. Well—this extremity was prevented by an accident. She had a severe illness, which caused her to fear that she might die before my claim was established, and my identity proved.

She brought me to England, and we lived among the hills, sometimes with the gipsy tribes, but mostly alone; so that I almost forgot my Spanish, without learning English, for my mother spoke very little to me, intending, I fear, that I should be a mere wild man of the woods, when I returned to my father. She would show me the house from a distance, and point out the hills and steeples and farmhouses that marked the boundaries of the estate that was to be mine; and once she brought me up to the hermitage yonder, and showed me, through the crevice, the three sons of my father by his second marriage. She told me they were my enemies, and would try to keep from me the inheritance which was mine by right. Do not look so frightened, Ellen. Neither she nor I had any share in their cruel death. While I looked at them my heart warmed towards them. I thought of the wide domain that my mother had shown

me, and I said to myself, 'There is enough to divide amongst us, and that large house can hold us all.' In my soul I called them brothers, and I longed to go into the garden and join in their play. I knew that I must not show myself to them, and I could not find words to express to my mother what I felt, and how I wished to make friends with them. You have often seen a dog trying to make known something that he could not utter; that was just my case, and I felt the tears rolling down my cheeks. I loved those fair young brothers of mine! I thought of them, in such strange incoherent fashion as my thinking then was; I longed passionately to see them again, to speak to them; but I never beheld them more. You know how they died. Mrs. Sweetman narrated that horrible tale very faithfully."

"Good Heavens, Reginald!" cried Ellen, indignantly, "where were you, then, that you could hear her?"

"Not in your room, dear," he replied, "nor did I hear it at all. My mother heard it. There is a secret communication between your chamber and the one where she died, and she went through it to look at you on the night after you were wounded, as she had often done before, though you had not seen her. She said she liked to hear your prayers. She told me that Sweetman related to you the family history, and she felt very grateful to you for defending her when the old woman suggested that *she* might have poisoned my brothers. She loved you well, Ellen, though she had never spoken to you; but she loved you for undoing her own evil work, and restoring her son to somewhat of the nature of a human being. You recollect how she spoke of that before she died, yet not much humanised was I when I drew that fatal trigger!"

"You say she reported Mrs. Sweetman's narrative to you?" said Ellen; "that must

have been after she received her wound. Why was it not attended to in time?—Her life might have been saved!”

“She did not tell me she was hurt,” replied Reginald, sadly; “she said she was ill, but I did not imagine that she was wounded, still less that she was near her death. And there she lies!” he added, pointing to the base of the precipice, on the edge of which he was standing, where Ellen might have seen, had she ventured to look over, the pile of stones which marked Mrs. Hawkshawe’s grave.

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THE HAWKSHAWES

A Novel

BY

M. A. BIRD

AUTHOR OF "SPELL-BOUND," "THE FATE OF THORSCHYLL,"
ETC. ETC. ETC

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II



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THE HAWKSHAWES

CHAPTER I.

REGINALD AIDS IN THE FULFILMENT OF THE PROPHECY.

“I WILL tell you the rest in as few words as I can,” continued the young man, after a pause. “After I had seen my brothers, my greatest wish was to speak to them, and make friends with them. I know now that they would have scorned the friendship of a gipsy boy, and laughed, had he claimed kindred with them; but I thought of nothing at the time except the pleasure of making myself known to them, and telling them that they should each have an equal share of the property after their father’s death. I did not know that they had been murdered a

few days after I saw them, but my mother did, and told me of it afterwards. They were poisoned by their grandmother, because they did not resemble the Hawkshawe family! and she wished the property to pass to a distant branch who were Hawkshawes! Can you wonder that I hate that old woman? Can you wonder that in my savage, untamed state I should desire to kill her?"

"Oh, Reginald! If you had killed her!" said Ellen, shuddering.

"I do not think it would have burthened my conscience very heavily," he replied; "but I now rejoice that I did not harm her, having no ambition for the office of executioner. I reproach myself far more for that chance shot," he added, mournfully, "though Heaven knows I would sooner it had gone into my own breast! 'Tis well that I have not killed Lady Clarissa, though I fear she will do more harm before she dies; however, that is merely a conjecture

—a vague fear, and does not concern *your* precious life. I was wandering about in the neighbourhood of the house, hoping, as I told you, to see my brothers, when I encountered my father. I knew him by sight, and did not avoid him. He seemed struck by my appearance, and asked me my name, which I would not tell him. He asked me to go with him, to which I readily agreed, as I thought I should then surely see my brothers. The woman who had nursed me was sent for, and several old servants, who had lived in the house when I was born. They all said that I was certainly the lost heir of the Hawkshawes; and when they saw this mark, with the name tattooed beside it," and as he spoke, he showed Ellen his arm, just above the wrist, "they were all ready to swear to my identity. You have heard somewhat of my ungovernable temper, and you have, unfortunately, seen somewhat of it too; but the accounts have

fallen very short of the reality. I was more like a demon than a human being. However, I need scarcely tell you that. You know, too, how your gentle influence has roused the good, and subdued the bad that is in me. And now, sweet Ellen, I have told you the whole story of my life, up to the present moment. If the future be brighter and better, it is to you that I shall owe it. No doctors of divinity could have lectured me, or goaded me into submission; but your gentle wooing ways, your pretty airs of authority that seemed to say I *must* obey you, because you were so beautiful; your sermons and grave reprimands, which it would have been unmanly not to listen to with deference—all this, and above all, a suspicion that my father, until he himself conceived a passion for you, would not have hesitated to sacrifice you, body and soul, to my advancement, threw around you a halo of divinity

that made me respect, while I passionately loved you; and made me a tolerably tractable pupil, by impressing on me the deference due from a gentleman to a lady. You look surprised, Ellen; you did not guess at all this. Yet I have not deceived you. You were mistaken; and that I did not set you right is the only deception I have practised on you."

He paused, and stood looking over the sparkling sea, with a calm, melancholy air. Ellen watched him with a sort of awe. Then he looked up to the bright blue sky. From the shelf of rock where they stood little was visible but sea and sky, the top of the cascade where the water made its first spring over the rock, and by leaning forward, the strip of beach below, with its edge of foam, and the lonely cairn that marked the gipsy's grave.

Ellen watched the expression of his noble face, but would not interrupt, by one word,

the current of his thoughts. She recalled the impression left by his countenance when she first beheld it ; there was the same regularity of feature which had struck her then, only improved by the thick curly beard, and paler and thinner from the effects of close application to study ; but yet how changed the face was ! She had watched the alteration going on from day to day, or it would have been difficult to believe that the calm, dignified, intellectual man before her, was the same being as the wild, half idiotic-looking youth whose appearance had so startled her on her first introduction to him.

“When I go,” said Reginald, at length, in a low, sad tone, “it is possible that we may never meet again. Even if we do, it may only be for a very brief period ; and our next parting will, in all probability, be for ever. This will not be from my own wish or choice, sweet Ellen ; you will not

suppose anything so absurd as that; but I mean, simply, that such may be my fate. You do not love me, Ellen; but you feel some interest in me, particularly as regards my 'eternal welfare,' as you call it, and I should not like you to be made miserable by the thought that I died an atheist, supposing it possible that such a being can exist out of Bedlam. I will not say that I believe all you have tried to teach me, but I should not fear to yield up my soul to my Maker, whenever it is required, satisfied that a just God will not punish an imperfect creature, because his acts and thoughts partake of the imperfection with which he was born."

"Even this limited belief is something to rejoice at, compared with the awful darkness of your former state," said Ellen. "You do, then, firmly believe in the existence of a God?"

"How can I look abroad upon this fair

earth, upon the sea, the sky, the sun, the stars, and feel a moment's doubt?" he exclaimed. "How can I become acquainted with any fact in Nature, from the vast orbit of a comet, to the structure of the smallest insect's wing, and think that all this came by chance! Why, *chance* might have placed a monkey's head upon that pretty neck of thine, or terminated those delicate fingers with the talons of a cat! No, no, Ellen; I am no believer in chance. Could chance give the faculty to write a good book? Could chance give man that wonderful power of thinking, and expressing his thoughts in language? But I must talk no more, for the sun is low, and I have yet to show you the track down the cliff, and the place where the boat lies. I will leave with you my copy of Carlyle's works, and then you can judge for yourself whether I could possibly read and relish that man's writings, and be that mixture of imbecility

and wickedness which must go to the composition of an atheist. Now give me your hand. Step firmly; keep your eyes steady, and there is no danger."

He led her down a difficult and zigzag path, and they stood together on the beach, midway between the cairn and the mouth of the brook. The cascade fell about a hundred yards beyond the cairn. Where the brook formed a small estuary, there were several large masses of rock which appeared to have fallen from the cliffs above at some distant period. Two of these formed a creek, where a small boat was lying, secured by a chain to an iron ring fixed into the rock.

"She is high and dry now," observed Reginald, "for the tide is at the ebb. At the flood she floats, and it is then easy to guide her into the current, which will carry you out into the bay. See!—this is the way to cast her loose. Now mark this,

Ellen—if the brook is very full, and comes rushing and foaming down more than it does now, you must on no account attempt to put out to sea. By heavens! I think I must be mad to show you this way at all. I feel like the Ancient Mariner, compelled by some internal force to speak out. But reason assures me that you are not likely to make use of my information; and I dare say the supernatural prompting is merely the desire—not very supernatural nor surprising either—to gratify the whims of my darling little friend.”

Ellen did not speak, for some of Mrs. Hawkshawe's dying words, which had completely escaped her memory amid the agitating scenes that followed her death, were now ringing in her ears. “He shows her the way of escape!” This was all she could recall, though she strove hard to remember the rest, feeling convinced that the words were prophetic.

“What are you dreaming of?” asked

Reginald, tenderly. "Are you sailing in imagination over the moonlit sea, with a soft summer breeze bearing the boat gently along?"

"No," she replied, "I was not thinking of that; though I fully believe I shall have to go out on this sea, moonlit and clear, or dark and stormy, as it may happen to be."

"I fully believe the contrary," said Reginald, "or I would not leave you. However, to make your mind more easy, be assured that everything shall be done to facilitate your escape. A rope shall be fixed up along the pathway, and a life-belt shall be placed in the boat, which I particularly beg of you to put on before starting. And now we will talk no more about this insane project."

"There is one thing you have forgotten," said Ellen. "Which way am I to go?"

"Round that headland," he replied. "Give it a wide berth—that is, keep at a

good distance from it, and you will easily double it. On the other side lies a fishing-village, where you can get help. And now let us go back. We shall be missed."

The ascent of the rocky path was less difficult than the descent. When they reached the hermitage, Reginald again pulled off his boots, which he had resumed before their descent to the beach, and carried Ellen safely through the streamlet to the dry turf of the garden. While her companion re-adjusted his *chaussure* she wandered out upon the lawn, where she was somewhat surprised, and little gratified to find Mr. Hawkshawe, who very seldom honoured the garden with his presence.

Ellen had more than one reason for disliking this man; for besides his unprincipled conduct with regard to her letters, he had assumed a tone of gallantry towards herself which was highly disagreeable. She could not account for the antipathy she felt

for him. It was violent and instinctive. It was not allied to fear, it was not indignation at his baseness, though she shuddered when he approached her, and felt her lip curl and her nostrils quiver when he addressed to her words of covert admiration. There was some element in her repugnance beyond all this, which she could only define by saying that she disliked him *because* she disliked him. When she now saw him advancing towards her, her first impulse was to run away; but this feeling was instantly checked as worse than useless, and she only slackened her pace to a still slower saunter, that she might not go beyond Reginald's hearing.

“All alone, Miss Maynard!” said Mr. Hawkshawe, in an insinuating tone. “Wandering ‘in maiden meditation, fancy-free,’ to enjoy the congenial loveliness of this exquisite evening? Or are your dreams devoted to some one thrice happy mortal, who——”

"I was thinking, sir," interrupted Ellen, with as composed and business-like an air as she could assume, "that, as your object is now accomplished, and your son is thoroughly awakened not only to the necessity of study, but to an ardent love for it, you can very well dispense with my services."

"I think I have somewhere a written document," said he, in a slow, determined tone, "dated the twenty-third of last September, and purporting to be a solemn pledge and promise that you would remain in my family for a full year. It is now June, Miss Maynard."

"But, sir, the object for which I came being accomplished——"

"We will not talk of the object, but of the promise," said Mr. Hawkshawe, drawing closer to her side. "I cannot consent to part with you, sweet Ellen. Wait yet a little while, and you will see what fate and fortune may have in store for you."

She felt his hand touch her waist, lightly indeed, but it startled her like a galvanic shock. At one spring she cleared the little brook by which they were standing, and stood on the other side, wrathfully facing her enemy.

"Reginald is within call, Mr. Hawkshawe," said Ellen. "Do not make me the cause of another altercation between you."

"Nay, nay, Miss Maynard, you are too hasty," said Mr. Hawkshawe, with a slight laugh. "I would not for the world offer you the least insult, though I confess that my feelings of gratitude and almost paternal affection led me to be too familiar in the expression of them. For this and all my other offences against you I offer an humble apology; and do not suppose that I mean to force you to remain here against your will after Reginald is gone. His wish is, as I suppose you are aware, to enter the army, and go to the Crimea."

“Go to the Crimea!” repeated Ellen, turning deadly pale; “he did not tell me that!”

Mr. Hawkshawe’s cheek also blanched, and his black eyes glared as he watched these signs of emotion; but he quickly recovered himself, and went on in an unmoved tone.

“Yes,” said he; “and he will shortly go to town to effect the purchase of a commission, and make all the necessary arrangements. This is his present intention, but we cannot always calculate upon the permanence of a young man’s whims; and he *may* return home, or have to wait some months for his commission. When that business is settled, when I am sure that he will not need your teaching any longer, your present engagement shall terminate, and you shall be free to depart, although there may yet remain some months of the period for which you agreed to stay.”

"That is all that I desire or expect, sir," said Ellen.

"Then we may consider that question disposed of," said Mr. Hawkshawe. "Reginald will not be gone more than a week at farthest, and I hope you will be able to pass away that time with your books and music, though you will be left in solitude."

"Are you going to accompany your son?" asked Ellen, hastily.

"I think not," he replied, looking rather black at the hope that was implied by the vivacity of her question, "but I shall probably have to go to Plymouth on business."

Ellen inclined her head in reply, not being able at the moment to frame a sentence that should not appear too much like a desire for his absence. Reginald at that moment emerged from the shrubbery, and Mr. Hawkshawe soon after took his departure.

About a week after the visit to the hermitage, Reginald presented to his tutor (who was only a curate with a small stipend) a comfortable living in the north, which was in his father's gift, observing afterwards to Ellen, that it was an easy way of getting rid of the old gentleman without paining his feelings. But Ellen had seen the glow of delight that accompanied the gift, and she knew that it was from gratitude and regard for a worthy man, and from no selfish impulse, that he had importuned his father for the presentation to this living on the death of the former incumbent.

In another fortnight Dr. Gibson and his sister were gone, and the carriage stood at the door waiting to convey Reginald to the railway station. He had bidden adieu to Ellen in the library. Lips had quivered and hands had trembled as they took a formal and ceremonious leave of each other,

and he was half-way across the hall when he ran back to give her one parting injunction. She was sitting on a sofa with a book in her hand, just where he had left her.

"Ellen," said he, as he approached her hastily, "if you *should* have to use the path through the hermitage (though I do not think you will), don't forget to take a towel with you to dry your feet, or you may take a severe cold. And should you really resolve to go, burn a light in one of your bedroom windows all night, and you will find trusty friends in the hermitage in the morning. I will give orders that your windows shall be watched. The friends may be rough-looking fellows, but you need not fear to trust them. They will take you to a place of safety, or obey any orders you may choose to give them."

"Thank you, Reginald," said Ellen, without raising her head.

“What! not one smile!—not one farewell glance!” said he, stooping to look into her face. “Tears, Ellen!—dear Ellen! are those shed for me?”

“You know I love you as a brother, Reginald.”

“As a brother!—ay, true,” he repeated, sadly. “Yes, yes—very true—as a brother!—only as a brother! Then as a brother let me kiss away my sister’s tears.”

He kissed the drops from her eyes and cheeks, pressed her hand, and was gone. A foreboding shiver passed through her frame, for she felt that that parting “might be for years, or it might be for ever.”

CHAPTER II.

THE DOVE IS IN DANGER OF FALLING A
PREY TO THE HAWK.

THE day of Reginald's departure was to Ellen a long and gloomy one, which she tried to ascribe to the weather, which was chill and rainy.

She could not eat—she could not read; and when she sat down to the piano, it chanced by some fatality that every piece she played recalled vividly some scene in which those same harmonies had been instrumental in soothing Reginald's turbulent moods, or rewarding him for application to distasteful study.

It was, very odd, she thought, that the

absence of her usual occupation should make her feel so dull; and she furtively wiped away her "quiet" tears, and ignored their existence.

Women, and perhaps men too, often cheat themselves most egregiously with regard to their own sentiments. Any impartial observer, taking into consideration all the circumstances, would have decided that Ellen grieved over Reginald's absence, and was depressed by the vague dread which possessed her that that absence might be indefinitely prolonged. But Ellen would in no wise admit this. If the imaginary impartial observer had been in actual bodily presence, and had assured her, with that ostentatious candour which persons of that kind are fond of displaying, that her tears flowed for Reginald—that her whole thoughts were of Reginald—that her sighs were heaved for Reginald—that her fears were alarmed by the

dangers he would meet at the seat of war—that her heart beat proudly when she thought of the noble daring that prompted him to rush into honourable danger—had this unpleasant observer taken a mental photograph of her inmost soul, and laid it before her, she would, with perfect good faith, have denied the accuracy of the picture.

Perhaps the still small voice of conscience was going through some process of this sort, for, as the twilight shadows were closing around her, she suddenly started up with an air of consternation, and took from her desk a miniature portrait of Frank Willoughby. Did she confess to herself that this was the first time during the course of that day that she had recollected his existence? Probably not; for by one of those subtle courses of self-deception which women practise on themselves, she began to attribute all her sorrow to her

separation from Frank, and all her anxiety to the dangers to which he was exposed.

She stood in the recess of a window, contemplating the picture. It represented a handsome manly young fellow, in regimentals. The countenance was open, good-humoured, and genial, but a physiognomist would have noticed a want of decision and firmness about the mouth. Ellen looked intently, and presently a change came over the face she looked upon. Strong, straight, black eye-brows took the place of Frank's light, delicately arched, and pencilled ones. The laughing blue eyes became dark and steady, burning with a smothered fire. The fine Grecian nose expanded into larger and bolder outlines; the brow became higher and broader, and black masses of hair swept over it like raven's wings; while the lower part of the face was clothed in a short but majestic beard. In fact, her imagination had

covered poor Frank's picture with the lineaments of Reginald Hawkshawe.

She had heard no step, no noise of opening or closing door, but a sudden shiver warned her that Mr. Hawkshawe was behind her. She looked round with an air of haughty inquiry into the cause of his intrusion.

"There must be a strong sympathy between us, Miss Maynard," said he. "You were so absorbed that I am sure you did not *hear* me."

"It is a sort of mesmeric attraction or repulsion," said she, with a slight emphasis on the last word. "I feel it towards some persons."

"I trust it is not repulsion in my case," said Mr. Hawkshawe; "but at all events there was a strong counter-attraction in the portrait. Is that your *fiancé*?"

He took the picture from her hand, for she was too much frightened to withhold it,

and examined it closely in the lingering daylight.

"This is not the man whom Nature intended to be your husband, Ellen," he said. "This face expresses a vacillating character which could not long command your respect."

"It also expresses candour and nobility," said Ellen, thinking of the letters, but refraining from more pointed allusion to them, for fear of rousing further enmity between Reginald and his father.

"Both very estimable qualities," returned Mr. Hawkshawe. "But do you suppose that your heart will crave nothing more in your husband? If you think so, let me undeceive you; let me tell you what you *will* require—what you *will have*—what you *must have*. A loftier intellect, a character of more firmness and energy than this delicate youth's; above all, a passionate, all-absorbing love, such as a young coxcomb like that could never feel!"

And he cast the picture from him in disdain.

Without stopping to pick it up, Ellen rushed towards the door, but she was detained midway by the strong hand of her pursuer.

"Stay—stay," said he, "it is useless to run away. You *must* hear me. The love that can alone come up to the exalted ideal of your fond young heart must be the love of a man whose soul has been tried and purified in the fire of suffering; not that of a youth whose admiration would be divided between you and his looking-glass. You must be *my* wife, Ellen!"

"You dare to say this," cried Ellen, indignantly, "and your wife still living!"

"I know that I have the appearance of a wife," he replied, calmly—"a ghastly phantom, that sits at my board like the skeleton at an Egyptian feast. But she will be no impediment long, dear Ellen."

Her disease has taken a fatal turn, and she cannot live many days."

"Then wait at least till she is in her grave before you talk of another marriage," said Ellen, hoping to gain time by temporising. "And why are you here at all, Mr. Hawkshawe? Did you not promise me solitude during your son's absence?"

"Stratagems are allowable in love and war, you know, fair lady," he replied, with a laugh. "I merely said that to lull you into security."

"Then you uttered a deliberate falsehood!" said Ellen.

"You cannot make me angry with you, dearest," returned Mr. Hawkshawe. "And now the stratagem having succeeded, and placed you absolutely in my power, you must surrender to my terms."

"Never!" exclaimed Ellen, firmly.

"Hear first what they are," said he—
"simply that you shall give me a written

promise to become my wife within three days after my present wife's death."

"Detestable monster!" exclaimed Ellen.

"Such a proposal does not need denial."

"You refuse me, then?" said he.

"Absolutely," she replied. "With scorn, contempt, and hatred, do I refuse you."

"Be it so!" he said; and he frowned till his black brows met. "You have signed your own doom. I would have wooed you gently, Ellen, as fair lady should be wooed. I would have been your slave; for when a man of my age loves, he gives no divided affection."

"Sir!" cried Ellen, struggling to free her arm from his grasp, "must I repeat that it is an insult for you to speak to me of love?"

"Not so, dear one!" he said, attempting to fold her in his arms, but only succeeded in possessing himself of her other hand; "in extraordinary circumstances, extraor-

dinary proceedings are allowable. You must not look upon me as a married man. Consider how many years my unhappy wife has been a miserable idiot."

"What made her so?" asked Ellen, hoping that, if there were any truth in the housekeeper's story, this question would rouse his anger, which she would much prefer to his love.

"Grief," he replied, in a low, stern tone—"grief for the loss of her children." His back was towards the window, and she could not see how pale he had become.

"And with that piteous spectacle daily before your eyes, constantly recalling the terrible cause of her misfortunes, you can be so unmanly as to speculate upon her death, and address proposals of marriage to another woman?" said Ellen. "Mr. Hawkshawe, this is not love! It is some monstrous and selfish feeling that a demon would be ashamed to own!"

"Go on," he said, in an admiring tone. "You look so infernally handsome when you are angry, that I could almost wish you were a confirmed shrew! Socrates might well adore his beautiful Xantippe, if she were only half so lovely as you are! With that blushing, indignant, averted face—those flashing, resentful eyes—the eloquent lip and nostril, quivering with anger now, but showing in their sensitive movements how ready the thunder-storm is to end in a passionate rain of tears—with all this you look so enchanting in your present mood, that I can hardly believe it possible for me to love you more when you are gentle, tender, and dove-like, as I will teach you to become."

"You will see me in no mood but my present one, Mr. Hawkshawe," she replied, striving to suppress the symptoms which had excited his admiration; "for, believe me, were you even free to marry, I could

never become your wife. Though you are restrained by no feeling of decency, this assurance ought to satisfy you. Let go my hands, sir."

"Not," he said, raising her right hand to his lips, "until this little prisoner has signed the articles of capitulation."

"I would cut it off sooner!" said Ellen, indignantly.

"Then I fear you will compel me to make you a prisoner altogether," said he.

"You dare not! I defy you to do it!" cried Ellen, with an appearance of unshaken courage, though her heart quailed within her.

"There are few things that I *dare* not do," replied Mr. Hawkshawe, "and locking you up is certainly not one of them. You do not like the idea of being a prisoner; I can see that easily, though you carry it off with a firm and resolute air. Give me your promise to marry me three days after

my wife's death, and I will set you free. You would not break your word."

"And therefore I will not pledge it to what I cannot and will not accomplish," said Ellen.

"Tut—tut," he ejaculated, contemptuously. "You must not talk in that childish way. Be reasonable, Ellen. Understand that you *must be my wife*. Dost thou comprehend me, child? There is no choice offered thee, except to take thy fate kindly, or reduce me to use coercion."

"And where then are the laws of my country, and my rights as an English-woman?" she demanded.

"The laws are doubtless quite safe in the statute-book," he replied, with a laugh that made her blood curdle; "and as for your rights—they are all very well in theory, like everything else, until opposed by practice. When you are mine, Ellen, I will defend your rights! but just at present I

am sorry that you compel me to make them bow to my might."

Ellen took a brief and rapid mental survey of the position in which she was placed.

"If I am a prisoner," she said, "let me at least be alone. Quit the room, sir, and if you are so fond of the office of jailer, lock the door."

"No, my charmer, this room is not to be your prison," said he. "You express so much willingness to be locked up here, that I suspect some means of escape. No—no. Not here! You must remain in your bed-chamber."

He endeavoured to lead her from the room, but she made such a vigorous resistance that he was obliged to carry her. She shrieked for help, but all in vain. He had closed the doors leading to the hall as he came along, and her screams could not be heard. He carried her upstairs to her own

bed-room, put her in, and taking the key on the outside, quietly informed her that he was going to lock her in.

"I do not care for that if I am free from your presence," she retorted, angrily.

"There is yet time for you to change your mind and listen to reason," he said, ere he closed the door. "I warn you, Ellen, that you will repent of your obstinacy. Even yet you may sign that promise."

"I will not!" she answered, resolutely.

"Then be the consequences on your own head!" he replied. "To-morrow you will be glad to do it. Think well over my words. There may be one more chance for you."

He withdrew, locking the door after him. Immediately the bolts inside were drawn, and some heavy piece of furniture was placed against the door.

"Barricade the door as you will," he

whispered through the key-hole; "you are locked in, but *I am not locked out!*"

His step was heard retreating down the long passage, and she stood fixed to the spot, frozen by the horrible thoughts suggested by that fiendish whisper.

"Not locked out!" she repeated, peering round the gloomy chamber, and dreading to see the lofty figure of her persecutor emerge from the obscurity. "Oh, Reginald, Reginald, why did you abandon me! But I must not waste time in vain regrets; what short space I have must be given to action. *Not locked out!*—how can that be? Ah!—the secret door by which Mrs. Hawkshawe entered! But where is it? How shall I discover it? I have no light. Stay—here is a box of matches—that is something."

With a trembling hand she lighted one of the matches, and by its feeble and short-lived ray examined the wall near the head of the bed, where she knew the door must

be, as it was on that side Mrs. Hawkshawe had appeared. Her very anxiety and trepidation retarded the accomplishment of her wishes. Her hand shook, and the matches went out, or she struck them so violently that they broke off instead of igniting.

"This will not do!" she murmured. "I never needed nerve and presence of mind so much, and all my faculties seem to be deserting me. Merciful Father, aid and protect me! and deliver me as a bird from the snare of the fowler!"

With more composed feelings she renewed her search, and as the last match but one was consumed, she discovered that one of the panels slid back into the wall, leaving just space for her to pass through.

The last glimmer of light showed her that this opening did not lead immediately into the large apartment in which Mrs. Hawkshawe died, but into what looked like a closet or passage. That she should have

light to discover the means of exit from this place was of the utmost importance, and having but one match left, she reflected how to supply the deficiency. It did not take long to decide. Having screwed up several long rolls of paper, she put a quantity more into the fire-grate, and then with a steady hand lighted the sole remaining match.


CHAPTER III.

THE ESCAPE.

TRIFLES become important by the circumstances under which they occur. Ten thousand housemaids daily strike lucifer matches into light, and at the slightest distraction—the quarrelling of two dogs in the street, or the sound of a hurdy-gurdy—will stand a-gape till it is burnt out, and then deliberately light another. “It is only a match.” But of what quite infinite value was that one little match to poor Ellen! More than life depended on its burning or not burning. She scarcely dared to breathe, and dreaded lest her hand should start involuntarily and extinguish it. All is well!

It burns—the paper in the grate is lighted, and she is so far towards safety.

As she threw a shawl around her she thought of Reginald's parting injunction. It is so pleasant to obey the wishes of those who love us. She rolled a towel round her arm that she might not drop it in her flight, and then lighting one of her paper torches, proceeded to the secret passage. With the aid of her eyes it was easy to undo the fastenings on the opposite door, but she would have found it impossible to do it in the dark, and her grateful thanks rose to Heaven in a joyful murmur. Having set both panels open, she returned and extinguished her torch, for the moon shone in fitful glimpses, and would suffice to light her on the well-known way to the library, and the fastenings of the window leading into the garden were so well known to her, that she could undo them in the dark if she found them secured.

The night was wild and stormy, and she thought with terror of the boisterous sea on which she was to put forth ; but she dreaded the sea less than the wicked man into whose power she would inevitably fall if she remained, and so she went on, unhesitating. She regretted much that the want of a lamp or candle prevented her summoning Reginald's rough gipsy friends to her assistance. How gladly, she reflected, would she now have hailed one of those swart faces which had so terrified her on the night of Mrs. Hawkshawe's funeral ! But she placed her trust in a higher than mortal power, and gave but a passing and momentary regret to the precarious helps of earth.

After passing through the secret doors she re-closed them carefully, and stood in the gloomy chamber where the wild and unhappy spirit of the gipsy had forsaken its tenement of clay. She was not superstitious, but a chill ran through her veins as she

recalled the circumstances attending the last time that she had stood within that apartment. In addition, she had the discomfort of not knowing in which direction to find the door, as the moon was at that moment overclouded, and then for the first time the question arose in her mind "whether the door would be unlocked." Cold drops of terror stood upon her brow, and her eyes seemed to protrude from their sockets in their endeavour to penetrate the darkness. At that moment a bright gleam of moonlight streamed through the window, and she found herself face to face with the deceased Mrs. Hawkshawe. It was as much owing to the paralysis of fear as to self-command that she suppressed a shriek that might have led to fatal results; and the moon fortunately shone sufficiently long to show her the mistake she had made. It was not Mrs. Hawkshawe's spirit, but her portrait, before which she stood.

Ellen felt greatly relieved, and impelled by the urgency of flight she made no pause, but darted to the door. Alas! it was locked—and the key gone! She looked round in despair, and by the last glimmer of the again overclouded moon she caught sight of another door, opposite to that by which she had entered, and apparently leading to another room of the suite. She found it—groped for the handle, and with unspeakable joy discovered that it was not fastened. A very faint light from the windows showed her that she was in another large and lofty room. There was a door on the side towards the corridor, but that was locked; cheered by former success, however, she sought for and found the means of egress into another apartment of the suite.

The wind was now howling fearfully, and the rain at times descended in torrents. She could hear the brook raging in its rocky bed, and she remembered Reginald's warn-

ing on no account to put off in the boat if its waters were higher than usual. An idea struck her:—instead of exposing herself to almost certain death alone on the raging sea in that stormy night, she would seek refuge with Mrs. Sweetman. The good old lady would conceal her during the night, and aid her to escape in the morning.

With increased spirit, and a much lightened heart, she continued her endeavours to get out of the long suite of rooms in which she found herself. The outer door of the next room was locked on the inside, but the key remained. By an exertion of strength with which the urgency of terror alone could have supplied her, she turned it in the rusty lock. The door came open with a loud cracking noise, and she found herself in a passage; but whether it were the one into which her own room opened she could not distinguish. She closed the door, as she had been careful to

do with all the others, so as to leave no traces of her flight, and stood for a moment pondering on the way she ought to take. The house clock struck eleven; but the sound reverberated so confusedly through the arched passages (remnants of monastic architecture) that it did not enable her to form a guess from its direction as to what part of the building she was in.

As the echoes died away another sound struck her ears. It was a strain of mournful, wailing music, rising at last to what sounded like a shriek of agony, and then descending through the plaintive intervals of the minor key into a low sobbing, like the inarticulate utterance of one that has no hope.

"That Eolian harp again!" thought Ellen; and yet she trembled with an undefined feeling of dread, and without further delay hurried down the passage, away from the side whence those mysterious sounds proceeded.

Tall, narrow windows lighted this passage on one side; and on the other was a row of low, arched doors, probably belonging to the dormitories of the monks. Again the music sounded, and now nearer than before. ●●

Something beat and flapped against a window within a few feet of her. It was no doubt a white owl; but to her bewildered imagination, it looked strangely like a pale female face, with the long hair streaming wildly on the blast of the storm.

Ellen staggered on a few steps further. Her limbs trembled so violently that she could scarcely stand, and a deadly faintness was creeping over her. She made a desperate effort to retain her senses, and had just, by one failing glance, ascertained that she was near the end of the passage, without any outlet except into the monks' cells, when she beheld a sight that instantly restored all her strength and energy.

Just entering the passage behind her, and thus cutting off all retreat, was Mr. Hawkshawe, carrying a light in one hand, and supporting with the other the tottering steps of the decrepit beldame, Lady Clarissa.

Ellen tried the nearest door: it resisted her frantic efforts to open it. Like a wild bird fluttering in a paroxysm of fear against its cage, she threw herself against the next—the last! It yielded, and she entered, but wished she could retreat again, for it bore evident signs of being the very spot towards which her enemies were bound. There was a fire of charcoal in the grate, and a large table in the centre covered with chemical apparatus. To attempt a retreat would, however, have been only to throw herself into the remorseless grasp of her deadly foe.

There was no alternative but to conceal herself in the cell, and await a chance of escaping. The means of hiding were fortu-

nately soon found. A table, crowded with lumber, stood in one corner, yet not so close but that it left space enough behind it to admit of Ellen's crouching there, with little risk of discovery. She was hardly settled, and was still offering up a voiceless prayer for protection in her great danger, when the door was opened.

"Why did you leave the door unlocked?" demanded the old woman, in a shrill querulous tone.

"There was no danger in leaving it for so short a time," replied her son. "Do you imagine that any one of the servants would venture here after dusk, especially with the Wail sounding so loud, to say nothing of their dread of the Grey Maiden looking in at the windows."

"You saw something as we came along," said the hag, seating herself slowly in a chair that was placed at the table; "I felt you start and tremble. What was it?"

"A white owl, I believe, beating against the window," he replied. "There is a nest of them in the old clock turret just above."

"It was no owl," said Lady Clarissa, in a sepulchral tone. "It was the Grey Maiden herself, depend upon it. I have seen her. I saw her the night your father died, and I looked at her till I could have drawn her picture. Take care that you do not give another Grey Maiden as an heir-loom to your family."

"There's no fear of that," returned Mr. Hawkshawe. "Marriage will make all right in a day or two. I would not be so hasty, but that I must have this business settled before that headstrong boy returns."

"Ay—ay," said the old woman. "And it is said that your ancestor meant to make all right by a marriage, when he wronged the Grey Maiden, and shut her up for the night in a dark cell. But in the morning he found her dying, with her brown hair

turned grey; and she cursed him with her last breath, and promised to haunt him and all his descendants on their death-beds. That promise has never been known to fail."

"I have no fear," replied her son. "Ellen will neither die nor curse me. I will teach her to bless, and love, and live for me."

"Teach her what you like, I care not," said Lady Clarissa, with a laugh of derision. "I shall be well pleased to see her pride humbled. Come—let us go to work."

While she spoke the Wail swept up the passage, and seemed to pause at the door and utter its loudest shriek. Mr. Hawkshawe glanced round uneasily.

"Do you hear that?" asked his mother, raising her withered yellow hand. "Her doom is fixed! The Wail rises loud at the mere mention of the work we have in hand."

"I wish it would not sound so loud,"

said he; "it seems loud enough for two deaths. I never heard it like that before."

"I have," said Lady Clarissa, gloomily. "Come, hand me that crucible."

They proceeded for some time in their operations, which Ellen watched with intense interest, having a vague idea of the object they had in view. "Are you sure you recollect the recipe exactly?" asked Mr. Hawkshawe, with some anxiety, as the old woman paused, as if undecided.

"I recollect it well," she replied; "I was but dwelling on the time when I first learnt the secret. I was young and beautiful then, Reginald."

"Will you not impart the secret to me?" he asked.

"No," she replied, "it is an accursed knowledge, and brings no happiness on its possessor. Thou art better without it, my son."

"Will this draught be ready for use to-morrow?" he inquired, after a long silence, during which they had assiduously continued their operations. "The obstacle to my marriage must be removed as speedily as it can be done with safety."

"She may have it to-morrow at breakfast," said the old woman; "and in ten minutes you will be free to lead Ellen Maynard to the altar."

"I would that I had yielded to your wish, and given her *this* dose on that dreadful night when she saw, or thought she saw, the spectres of her children," said Mr. Hawkshawe, gloomily. "It would have been a crime the less to answer for; and it is horrible to have destroyed her mind!"

"Will moaning over it restore her mind?" said Lady Clarissa, snappishly, "or if you are so penitent, would it not be more reasonable to let your wife live,

and leave your pretty Ellen for your son to marry? I'll answer for it, she would prefer him to you."

"No!—curses on him and——,"

It sounded almost as though this imprecation included his mother, but hateful as she was, Ellen distrusted her ears.

"We must have some more charcoal," said Lady Clarissa, chuckling, as she always did when she had succeeded in rousing her son's anger. "Have you got any here?"

"I must fetch some," he replied, moodily. "but I must take the lamp; you can do with the fire-light while I am gone."

He took the lamp and a basket for the charcoal, and departed.

Now was the moment for Ellen's escape. If she awaited Mr. Hawkshawe's return she must infallibly be either discovered, or locked up in that horrible cell to perish of hunger. Better than that the wide sea, with heaven's free air and sky!

The old hag was cowering over the fire, mechanically warming her hands, and occasionally picking up bits of charcoal, and placing them round her crucible.

Ellen crept out from her hiding-place. She would willingly have overset the table and destroyed the ingredients of the hellish mixture, but she had gathered from their discourse that the chief of these was in the crucible, and any such attempt would have ruined her own chance of freedom, without preventing the accomplishment of their plot. The instinct of self-preservation was irresistible. The door had been left ajar, the old woman was deaf, and did not hear the rustle of her dress. She passed quickly across the room, and found herself in the comparative freedom of the passage, just as Mr. Hawkshawe's light was disappearing at the other end.

The death music might wail, and the grey spectre flutter against the windows now; Ellen heeded them not. There were

worse spirits still dwelling in mortal bodies than any that gibbered and flitted in less substantial guise.

Her light step roused no echo as she fled along the oaken floor. When she gained the corner she saw Mr. Hawkshawe descending a flight of stairs. She followed, and found that there was another passage beyond the stair head. Along this she sped, rapidly as might be, and presently reached the large central staircase. Now she knew her ground. But her terror was so great that she had now no thought of anything but escaping completely from the house. In two minutes she stood breathless within the library. With eager, trembling hands she undid the fastenings of one window.

She is free! She is in the garden, with the wind blowing, and the rain beating, but she is free! Across in all haste to the hermitage. It is a mere ceremony to take off her boots and stockings, they are so wet already; yet she takes them off, thinking

of Reginald. Following his directions she wades through the water, and smiles sadly as she thinks of his parting injunction about the towel. When her boots are on again, she spreads the towel on the little altar.

"He will never see me again," she thinks with a sigh, "but this will show him that I thought of him to the last."

Then she took a knife from her pocket, cut off a long curl from her hair, laid it upon the cloth with a stone upon it, lest the birds should take it to line their nests, and dashing away some blinding tears, went her way to the boat.

The rope was securely fixed, and well was it for her that it was so, for the violence of the gale threatened at almost every minute to blow her off the narrow path. She did not dare to return to the hermitage, for Mr. Hawkshawe would be sure to discover that she had got out by the library

window; he might even trace her footsteps on the moist turf, and no corner of the garden would be left unsearched. He *might* find her there, and that possibility was more appalling than the fiercest tempest.

She reached the boat. Even in its sheltered nook it was bumping about against the rocks; but she thought not of that. It was afloat, and that was sufficient.

Again she bethought her of Reginald's instructions. The life-belt was there, tied to the seat of the boat. It could scarcely be of any use, she thought, in such a night, but she inflated it, and buckled it round her waist.

It seemed in this utter extremity, when she stood, as she thought, face to face with death, that her soul threw off the garment of hypocrisy that it had worn for her own deceiving, and gave itself up without reserve and without shame to the passion

that monopolised her heart. She did not say to herself that she loved Reginald, but she thought of him, and only him; and that with a tenderness and devotion that would have astonished her, had she had time to reflect upon it. Only once she remembered Frank Willoughby, and then with a sigh she murmured, "Poor Frank! he will grieve for my death! But he will soon forget me!"

The prospect of being, in a short time, separated for ever from Reginald choked her with grief, not for her own fate, but for the anguish he would feel; and if she prayed for life, it was more for his sake than her own.

In a lull of the storm she cast loose the boat, and put out upon the rushing current that poured in floods through the narrow gully. She gave one vigorous push against the rock to get as far as possible towards the centre of the stream, and then laid

down the oar, and seized the rudder. Fortunately the boat did not capsize, which was more than she had dared to hope for. She kept the helm steady, and in a few moments was out at sea, tossing like a cork upon the eddying waters.

Obedying Reginald's instructions to steer wide of the headland, and perfectly aware that however terrible the open sea might appear, her only chance of safety lay in keeping clear of the land, she kept her eyes upon the tall cliff, and carried along by the ebb tide, stood out towards the middle of the bay. While she looked, the rock assumed a reddish tinge. It deepened to a lurid glare, and the dancing waves, as they rose, caught the same hue upon their crests. She turned her head—Gracious Heavens! the Priory was in flames! Then Mrs. Hawkshawe's words burst upon her—"See how the flames arise! The guilty ones are consumed! The boat—

the boat! it will be dashed to pieces! No—it is safe upon the sands, and she is rescued!” She felt a deadly torpor stealing over her senses. With a last effort she slid from the seat to the bottom of the boat, that she might not fall overboard, and consciousness forsook her.

CHAPTER IV.

CRIME BRINGS ITS OWN PUNISHMENT.

WHEN Mr. Hawkshawe returned with a fresh supply of fuel, he found Lady Clarissa cowering over the fire, just as he had left her, looking like—

The foul witch Sycorax, who with age and envy
Was grown into a hoop.

She raised her head when the light from his lamp fell upon her, and returned, with her bleared and filmy eyes, the stern gaze which he fixed upon her.

“Is anything amiss?” she demanded, at length. “Have you met any more ghosts? This is a fine night for them.”

"Ghosts!" he repeated, contemptuously, "not I! I was thinking of far different matters."

"There was one here a while ago," continued the old woman. "I saw it gliding past the door, like a tall black shadow; but it vanished before I could make out what it was like."

"Tush!" replied her son, "you indulge in such dreams till you think them realities."

"They are not always dreams," she said; "they are real enough sometimes to the sight, to the hearing, even to the touch."

"Do you forget how you once strove to make me believe the contrary"? he asked, in a stern voice.

"Yes, yes, I remember," said she, hurriedly, "but that *was* a dream—a mere delusion."

"I would I could feel sure of that," said Mr. Hawkshawe, with a groan.

"You felt sure then," she said, "why do you doubt now?"

"There is too much to encourage doubt," he replied, gloomily, "you encourage it yourself by always avoiding a direct answer to my question. You know to what question I allude. Will you not answer it now?"

"Ay," she said, drawing herself nearly upright in the chair, "I will answer it as I have ever done, by asking in return, how you dare to put such a question to your mother?"

With an impatient shrug, Mr. Hawkshawe pointed to the crucible, while he fixed a stern and searching glance upon Lady Clarissa, and his compressed lips quivered with the emotions that he would not suffer himself to utter.

"I see—I see," cried the hag, with a diabolical chuckle, "you think that if I can make this pleasant sleeping potion for one, I

could have made it for another. Is that the only way you have of showing gratitude for my services? I had best break the crucible to atoms and suffer its contents to consume in the fire."

She raised the poker to carry her threat into execution; but her son arrested her hand.

"Nay, nay, you are too hasty," said he, "let the deed we have resolved on be accomplished. It is but half a murder."

"Do you suppose that God will judge you as an English jury would do," said the old woman, "and acquit you of the charge of murdering your wife because death was not inflicted at one merciful stroke? You destroyed her mind by one subtle poison, and now——"

"That was your act, not mine," interrupted Mr. Hawkshawe; "you feared she might disclose facts that would endanger your life; and yielding to your entreaties,

I consented to your giving her a drug which you said would suspend her mental faculties for a time. You have rendered her a hopeless idiot."

"And now you wish to complete the work, and remove her altogether," said his mother; "and that you call committing only half a murder! You are but a degenerate Hawkshawe if you cannot do courageously that which it is your will to do, and call the act by its right name too. You cannot, by giving it a milder name, make murder anything but murder. Your wife is in good bodily health, and likely to outlive you by many years. To-morrow morning you drop a little colourless liquid into her coffee, and in ten minutes she will be dead. If you were seen to do it, and any traces of poison could be discovered in her body, what pretty name do you think the coroner's jury would give to your performance?"

"You say there will be no traces of the poison left," said Mr. Hawkshawe, thoughtfully; "and none could be found in the bodies of my children."

"And what does that prove?" said Lady Clarissa.

"Only that poison *may* have been present," he replied, "though the chemical tests were wanting that would have detected it. Why do you still evade giving me satisfaction on this point? Can the worst reality be more injurious to you than the suspicions that constantly haunt my mind? I pledge you my word, as I have often done before, never to divulge the secret to anyone, even after your death."

"You are an ardent lover, upon my word!" cried the old woman, jeeringly. "Your fair bride awaits you, locked up in her chamber, and yet you waste time here in trying to extort a confession of murder from your mother! Leave the past alone.—

I and the past will go to the grave together."

"You *shall* tell me!" exclaimed Mr. Hawkshawe, grasping her arm. "Did you poison my children? Answer me! If you refuse I will lock you in this dismal den till you confess the crime, or clear yourself by an oath!"

"You think to conquer *me*!" cried Lady Clarissa, with a tone and glance of unutterable contempt. "Fool that you are! Who talks of conquering *now*?"

With her disengaged hand she had taken a small bottle from the table, removed the stopper, and as she uttered the last words she flung some of the contents in his face, drawing back, and averting her own, as she did so.

The effect was instantaneous. Violent convulsions shook his frame. But she had miscalculated upon one point. The gripe upon her arm involuntarily tightened. In

his struggles he fell upon the ground, dragging her after him. The table was overturned, and the lamp broken; but not, alas! extinguished.

The flame caught some papers over which the contents of a large bottle of spirits of wine had fallen, and the room was instantly filled with flame. The wretched pair saw the fate that was impending over them; but Mr. Hawkshawe, though perfectly conscious, was totally unable to control his own movements; and the miserable old woman had not strength to drag him a single inch towards the door, nor even to reach another bottle towards which she stretched her hand with frantic but impotent endeavours.

“Let go for one moment, Reginald!” she shrieked. “Let me reach the antidote! It will cure you in an instant! Let go! Let go!”

She tried to force his hand open, and

had partially succeeded, when it closed again like a vice, compressing one of her fingers in a grip of iron. Held now by both hands she was even more helpless than before.

Her struggles soon became terrific, and her yells filled the cell and the corridor; for a tongue of flame swept up her neck, and set fire to her hair and head-dress. Still her son lay extended on the floor, speechless, and now motionless, though his face expressed the tortures he was enduring, as his clothes became ignited, and slowly burnt upon him. Large drops poured from his brow, and his eyes were fixed upbraidingly upon his mother.

"I confess!" she shrieked—"I confess! I murdered them—I poisoned them! Now let me go! I confess! I confess!"

Her own evil deed was visited upon her. He had no power to let her go, nor himself to escape from danger. He could only look

at her in dumb agony, as he held her in that convulsive clutch.

The horrid scene lasted but a few moments. The miserable woman's yells were for that brief space incessant. She writhed like an eel, and strove to tear away his hands with her toothless gums, and still the last object she beheld, before the fire had destroyed her sight, was his face distorted with agony, and his large distended eyes fixed on her in silent reproach. A moment afterwards her shrieks ceased suddenly—her head fell back, and her sufferings were over.

Yet shrieks and wailings might still have been heard, mingled sometimes with sobs and laughter, now outside the windows, now beneath the vaulted roofs of the antique corridors. A white object fluttered and flapped against the casements. Perhaps the owls were attracted by the sight of the flames. The superstitious would have

believed that the avenging spirit of the race looked in with triumph on the destruction of her enemy's descendants.

Other cries soon began to sound through the house; the cries of human beings shouting the terrific word "Fire."

The servants were aroused, and the inhabitants of the neighbouring village were rapidly collecting. Had they been on the spot on the first alarm they would have been too late to save their unhappy master. As the lifeless and blackened body of his mother sank backwards, one deep, dreadful groan escaped him. Did a thought of Ellen cross his mind, locked in her chamber and perhaps doomed to the same horrible death that he was suffering?—Who can know?

Then the smoke gathered thicker around, and ended his torments.

Wider and higher spread the devouring flames; the entire wing of the Priory was

speedily in a blaze that, seized by the storm blast, and whirled and wafted in wild sport, cast a lurid glow for miles around, tinging the peaks of rocks far away, and gleaming on a little boat with one poor frightened maiden in it, floating out at sea.

CHAPTER V.

REGINALD HEARS THE DEATH WAIL. HIS
HASTY RECALL TO ST. OSYTH'S PRIORY.

ON his arrival in London, Reginald betook himself to the hotel recommended by his father, and where his name was a guarantee for every species of civility. He dined, and strolled about the crowded streets for an hour or two, observing the novel scene with dignified interest.

At length, having completely lost himself in the labyrinth of streets, he called a cab, and directed the driver to go to the — Hotel.

He had so little the air of a raw country-

man, that the cabman never dreamt of doing other than going straight to the spot, where, accordingly, his fare was deposited in less than two minutes. It was a sad mistake. If the poor fellow had known the real state of the case, he might have made a three mile circuit, and demanded a crown; but in blissful ignorance he pocketed his shilling, and vanished from the scene.

Reginald's slumbers that night were feverish and disturbed. He dreamt that he stood by his mother's deathbed, and heard the prophetic words that she had uttered. All came back as clearly as when it actually occurred. He awoke in alarm. The wind was high, and he thought of Ellen. What if, in terror of his father, she had persisted in trying to make her escape! No, he would not believe it. Besides, had he not secured against such risk by commanding the gipsies to watch her window? Was it likely that on such a night of

all others she would attempt to go to sea alone?

This reflection comforted him. He arose and drank a glass of water, bathed his hot brow, and composed himself to sleep again. To sleep, but not to rest. The same dream haunted him, even more vividly than before. He awoke with a start. How the wind howled! It whistled through the keyhole, or some crevice, sounding like the cry of a woman in agony.

Good Heavens! It was the Death Wail of his family! He hid his shuddering face in the pillow. Mrs. Hawkshawe he had seen that morning in good bodily health.

"Is it for her?" he asked himself. "Merciful Heaven keep my father innocent of that crime! Better that it were for himself!"

But the wind sunk, and the Death Wail was no longer audible. The young man reasoned with himself, and came to the

conclusion that after all it had been only the wind whistling through the keyhole, and that his heated brain just waking from a fit of nightmare, had converted it into the warning of death. He slept again after some time, and now his sleep was quiet and dreamless.

In the morning he had almost forgotten the nocturnal disturbance; and when the early post brought him a short letter from his father, containing some trifling commission which had been forgotten, he felt perfectly easy. The letter concluded with these words, which it may readily be imagined were the cause of its being sent at all: "Miss Maynard, I understand, has been playing and singing all day, so I conclude she does not find her solitude very irksome."

"He has not intruded upon her, then," was Reginald's very natural conclusion. "That is all well. What a fool I was to be so disturbed by a dream!"

After breakfast he presented himself at the Horse Guards, and was occupied till late in the afternoon in the business attending the purchase of a commission, which he expressly stipulated should be in the regiment to which he knew Ellen's lover belonged. The name of his favoured rival he intended to extort from her on his return home, which was the principal, if not the sole reason for his urging her to remain there during his preliminary visit to town. He would obtain the names of all the officers, and try the effect of each upon her tell-tale cheeks.

He returned to his hotel in high spirits. All was going well. The mortality had been great in the regiment of his choice, and he was assured of a speedy appointment.

"A person has been waiting nearly two hours to see you, sir," said a waiter. "He is a messenger from the Electric Telegraph Office."

The messenger stepped forward. During the previous night a great part of St. Osyth's Priory had been burnt to the ground, and Mr. Reginald Hawkshawe's presence was required immediately. The message was sent by Oliver Clark.

"When does the next train start?" demanded Reginald, in a hollow voice.

"In a quarter of an hour, sir," replied the waiter, "Bradshaw" in hand.

Reginald gave a sovereign to the messenger, sprang into a cab, and was off at full gallop to catch the train. There was a little bustle and consultation and wondering at the hotel; then his rooms were locked, that nothing belonging to him might be disturbed, and the business of the establishment subsided (if such a word is applicable here) into its usual routine of hurry-skurry, for the landlord felt no anxiety about his bill.

Reginald did not utter a word on his

journey. Some other passengers got into the carriage, but at the next stage got out again, to find more lively company. He was enduring tortures of suspense, from which only time could free him.

“The wail was no fancy then! Pray heaven it may have been for Lady Clarissa! Something terrible must have occurred, or why should the message be sent by Oliver, and not by my father? And more than all—is Ellen safe?”

Such was the theme on which his anxious thoughts rang the changes, while he sat with folded arms and clenched teeth, as though wrought up to endure with fortitude the agony of some surgical operation.

The carriage was waiting for him at the station, but Oliver had returned to the Priory, leaving word for his young master that he had thought it best to do so, as there was no one there to give any directions, except Mrs. Sweetman, and she had been

so frightened she was like beside herself.

"Where is my father?" asked Reginald, when the coachman had delivered this message.

"Please, sir, you'd better not ask till you get home," replied the man, crumpling his hat in his hands nervously; "please, sir, I'd rather not say nothing, because I mayn't know just the rights of it."

"Answer me at once, blockhead!" exclaimed Reginald, shaking him by the collar. "Where is my father?"

"Oh, sir, pray forgive me," said the poor fellow, while the tears streamed down his cheeks, attesting his sincerity, "I don't like to tell you such bad news. Mr. Hawkshawe is dead, sir. His body was found this morning, or I should say, yesterday morning, among the ruins. And Lady Clarissa's too, sir," he added briskly, as though the latter part of his intelligence

were some counterpoise to the gloom of the former part.

"My father dead!" said Reginald, pressing his broad palm upon his forehead, "but why should you say there was no one to give directions? Where is Miss Maynard?"

"Oh, sir, she's burnt too, there's no doubt; for she can't be found anywhere."

"Has her body been found?" gasped Reginald.

"No, sir, but they were digging for her when I came away, and I dare say they've found her by this time."

"Drive like the devil!" was Reginald's concise order, as he sprang into the carriage.

The coachman obeyed as closely as he could without killing his horses, and almost before they stopped, reeking with sweat, at the Priory gate, their impatient master sprang out.

Oliver had heard the approaching wheels, and appeared at the door, looking paler, and more woebegone than ever.

"Is Miss Maynard found?" demanded Reginald.

"No, sir," said the old man, in some astonishment that the stranger should be mentioned before the members of the family, "we can't find a trace of her, but perhaps the body is consumed. Will you come this way a moment, sir," continued Oliver, leading his master out of earshot of the other servants, "there's something very unaccountable about Miss Maynard, sir."

"What is it?" exclaimed Reginald. "Tell me quickly."

"Why, sir, after the alarm and confusion about the fire was over, and the other two bodies had been discovered, which I suppose you know, sir, they *was* discovered?" said the old man suggestively,

for his mind misgave him whether the coachman had said more than that Miss Maynard was missing.

"Yes—yes—I know," said his master, impatiently, "my father and Lady Clarissa—they are past help, Oliver; but my anxiety is for those who may yet be saved. What of Miss Maynard?"

"Well, sir, I thought it right to see if any one else was missing, and then we found that no one had seen Miss Maynard all the day. We went up to her room, but the door was locked, and we could make no one hear; so thinking she might have been frightened into a fit by the fire, we burst open the door. There was a chest of drawers leaning against it, inside, sir, and two bolts drawn, but the young lady was nowhere in the room, and besides that, she had not been to bed the night before, for it was not disturbed at all. When we had searched in closets and

presses, and everywhere, and the rest had all gone out, I caught sight of a small chink in the wainscot, so I looked, and found it was a sort of sliding door, sir, and it led into the room where the picture of your honour's mother is kept. There can't be a doubt but what Miss Maynard got out that way, sir; but where she is gone is more than I can guess."

"I will examine the room myself," said Reginald, and darted upstairs.

A short glance showed him that all was as Oliver had stated; the only additional fact being the quantity of burnt paper in the grate. On examination he also found traces of paper and matches about the secret door. This seemed strange. Why should she burn matches and paper if she had a candle?

He looked at the windows. No signs of lamp or candle there, yet the servants might have removed it when they searched

the room. But again the blinds were down, and she would have drawn one up if she had placed the signal for the gipsies.

He returned to the door. The key was gone; and wherefore all this barricading? He was heart-sick with anxiety. Some wrong and violence there had been; but to what extent?

He dashed down stairs to the library. The shutters of one window were open, and there was her desk, unlocked, and on the ground a miniature portrait. He caught it up—it was that of a young officer, who he felt sure must be Ellen's lover.

"Poor fellow!" he said, as he thrust it into his breast pocket, "he has lost her, I fear!"

Perhaps he had; but whether that loss should be much subject for regret to Reginald remained to be proved.

He hastened across the garden, and

dashed through the water, boots and all, into the hermitage, in the hope that she would have remained there till the storm abated.

Vain hope! There was indeed the proof of her having been there, but she was gone. He looked at the towel, which showed that even in the terror of her flight she had recollected his injunctions, and another object caught his eye,—the lock of hair! With a shout of joy he seized upon the treasure, and called her name till the cavern echoed; but there was no reply.

Perhaps she was on the beach. Down the steep and slippery path he sped, giving a hurried glance below to see whether she had fallen down the precipice. No sign of her to be found, but the boat was gone! He leaned against a rock, the very picture of despair, and looked out upon the sea.

Hope is the most difficult of all feelings

to destroy, especially in a young heart; and even while he looked so utterly desponding, hope began to revive. The boat was a little tub-shaped thing, at which he had often laughed, and promised himself a better one; but she lay on the water like a 'duck, and was almost as difficult to overturn. As long as Ellen's fate was uncertain he could not bear to think that she was not alive.

Inspired by this new gleam of hope he sprang up the rocky path again, pausing now and then to cast a keen glance over the sea, to discover, perchance, a little boat tossing upon its waters. The waves were dancing under the slant rays of the morning's sun, but no dark spot was visible.

"What weather had you here on the night of the fire?" demanded Reginald, bursting into the kitchen, where the servants, including Mrs. Sweetman and Oliver,

were assembled. The housekeeper was too nervous to remain in her own room, and Oliver had just been reading a chapter of the Bible to them.

"Dreadful stormy, sir," replied Oliver, "but fortunately it blew from the north-west, or every bit of the house must have been burnt."

"Would to God it had! so *she* had escaped!" muttered Reginald. "Saddle my horse," he added, aloud.

While the groom was gone to obey this order, Reginald suddenly recollected that he had neither eaten nor drunk for twenty-four hours. He cut a crust from a brown loaf that stood on the table, and told Oliver to fetch him a glass of wine. While the old man was pouring it out he ventured to ask his master if he would be pleased to give orders respecting the —, here he hesitated, the bodies of his honour's father and grandmother.

"Oliver, my friend," said the young master of Hawkshawe, laying his hand kindly on the old servitor's shoulder, "I leave all to you. See that everything is done that should be done for the family credit. Of the family *honour* it were perhaps best not to speak. Till one point is cleared up, I cannot show respect even to my father's remains. See to it all."

"I will, sir," said Oliver. He shook his white head as he watched Reginald gallop off at full speed. There was something wrong, he saw, but what, he could not guess, excepting that it had reference in some way to Miss Maynard.

After a sharp ride of some fourteen miles Reginald drew bridle at the door of a village smithy. The grinning smith came out.

"Welcome to your own! Lord of St. Osyth's!" he exclaimed.

"You have heard the news, then," said the young man, throwing himself from the saddle, "let my horse be cared for; and you, John Lynch, come hither. I must speak with you."

He passed through the shop into an inner room, followed by the smith. Their conference lasted for nearly an hour, and when they emerged from the dingy little parlour, Reginald's brow was much clearer than before.

"Yes, sir," said John Lynch, continuing the conversation as he patted the horse's arched neck, and scanned him with the admiring eye of a connoisseur, "by the plan we have arranged, there won't be a yard of coast between this and Bolt Head left unsearched. And as I have been fixed here for nearly six months, I shall just give up the shop to my brother for a time, and go on the tramp myself. Six months is too long to be confined to one place."

“That’s right, John,” said Reginald, “you are worth any six of the rest on a scent of this kind. Send me the earliest intelligence, and above all—lose no time. I would be off myself, but I must pay some deference to appearances. Good bye!”

CHAPTER VI.

THE INQUEST.—REGINALD TRIES AN EXPERIMENT.—A PEEP OUT OF THE WINDOW.

ON his return home Reginald found that the coroner had arrived, and was making his formal inquisition into the cause of the death of Mr. Hawkshawe and Lady Clarissa.

As the present head of the family was in London at the time of the catastrophe, his evidence could throw no light upon the business, and was therefore not required, further than to identify the bodies. He had not seen them before, and turned heart-sick at the horrid spectacle.

The business was quickly over. A verdict of accidental death was returned; and then the coroner and his myrmidons departed,

and left the undertakers to perform their ghastly office.

No question had been raised as to how the bodies of Lady Clarissa and her son happened to be in the spot where they were found, as the suite of rooms occupied by the old lady was on the lower storey of the wing that had been destroyed, and it seemed natural that Mr. Hawkshawe should either have been paying a visit to his mother, as he frequently did, or that he had rushed to her rescue on the first alarm of fire, and perished with her in the flames.

A more searching inquest was, however, to be held into the cause of their death; though in place of a jury of bumpkins, one keen and sorrowing mind would alone be called upon to give the verdict.

After a short rest, Reginald summoned Oliver, and bade him accompany him to the ruins, and point out the exact place where his father's corpse had been found.

They clambered over heaps of smouldering walls, where a couple of firemen were still keeping watch lest the flames should break out afresh, and stopped at a spot where a considerable quantity of the *débris* had been dug out.

By a gesture, Oliver signified to his master that this was the place, but his heart was too full to suffer him to speak.

"What is all this?" asked Reginald, pointing to some pieces of metal and half-fused glass that lay about.

"It's some of the queer things belonging to the old monks, I believe, sir," replied Oliver. "There was a row of their cells just above her ladyship's apartments, and many strange machines and vessels of different kinds I have been told were locked up in one of them."

"Chemical apparatus!" muttered Reginald, with a compressed pale lip, while he cast a scrutinizing glance around. Some-

thing like the bars of a fire-grate caught his eye. He pulled the object out, and within it found a few ashes, and a crucible. He placed the latter in his pocket, unseen by Oliver, and returned to the library.

Having placed the crucible under lock and key, Reginald wandered about the room, trying to guess what Ellen's occupations had been on the day of his departure.

The piano stood open. The music on the desk was his favourite piece. By the side of it lay a handkerchief of Ellen's quite damp. Had she been weeping? There was her work-basket, with her work thrown carelessly upon it, as though she had got tired of that employment.

Two or three books were taken down from the shelves, and left on the table. That was not like Ellen, for she always returned the books to their places. And, most startling evidence of all, there was her writing desk, unlocked and open, just as she had left it,

when, in a fit of penitence, she had taken Frank Willoughby's portrait out of it.

That she had been suddenly and violently intruded upon he could have no doubt; the open desk, and the miniature on the floor, were proofs of that. He locked the desk, wrapped the little bunch of keys in paper, sealed it with his coat of arms, and directed it to Ellen; and when Oliver entered to entreat his master to take some dinner, he gave him the packet, with strict injunctions to deliver it only to Miss Maynard, or, in case of her death, to her attorney.

"How is that old coach-horse?" asked Reginald, as Oliver was clearing the dinner-table.

"Just the same, I believe, sir," he replied. "I think John was going to ask your leave to shoot it, sir."

"Tell him to bring me the key of the stables, and a lantern," said Reginald; "I will go presently and look at it."

After all the household had retired to bed, a light gleamed through the window of the loose box in which the old horse was lying. Reginald was mixing a white powder with some water in one of those equine pap ladles by means of which medicine is administered to horses.

"Now, poor old fellow," he said, as he raised the horse's head, "I trust this will prove harmless, if it does not end thy sufferings more quickly than a bullet."

The animal swallowed the draught, and Reginald, placing the lantern so that its light fell directly upon the subject of his experiment, leaned with folded arms against the manger, watching the effect of the potion.

Lady Clarissa was right in saying she had not forgotten the recipe for making that deadly poison. The horse lay quiet for a few minutes, then sprang to his feet, and fell dead.

The next morning the groom reported that the horse had died during the night, and Reginald gave orders, and saw them carried out, that the carcass should be buried, without flaying, in a deep pit. The disorder of which the creature died was, he said, highly infectious, and he would suffer no man's life to be risked for the sake of a horse's hide. To prevent the cupidity of the groom or any of the helpers leading them into danger, he caused a quantity of vitriol to be poured over the carcass, and the pit was then filled up.

"Is it not strange," observed Mrs. Sweetman, as she and Oliver sat at tea that afternoon, "Master Reginald could think of the old carriage horse, and run half over the country after Miss Maynard, which I feel quite sure was what he went about yesterday, Mr. Oliver, and he has never once asked whether poor Mrs. Hawkshawe is alive or dead? I suppose he

thought if she'd have been burnt to death, too, he'd have heard of it."

"Have you finished your tea?" asked Oliver.

"Pretty near," replied the housekeeper; "but that's no answer to what I said. What do you think of it?"

"When you've finished your tea, ma'am, just come with me, and I'll show you a sight," said Oliver.

The promise of a "sight" has great power over the uncultivated female mind. Mrs. Sweetman's last cup was drained in a hurry, and she scarcely stopped to lock up her tea-caddy, before she announced to Oliver that she was ready, and he conducted her to a window that overlooked the garden.

"Well I never!" was the good lady's first exclamation. "Who ever would have thought it?"

"Ah! Mrs. Sweetman," said the old man,

with glistening eyes, "there's a good heart there—a noble heart! He's been wandering about with her for these two hours, just as you see him now."

The spectacle that had so excited Mrs. Sweetman's astonishment was that of Reginald and his poor, half-idiotic step-mother.

He was leading her about the garden, gathering flowers for her, and smiling sadly at her infantile expressions of delight at their beauty and fragrance. He watched her as tenderly as a mother would her child; bore with her whims and vagaries without a single glance of weariness or impatience; and strove, not unsuccessfully, to bow his hasty and manly mood to her timid and childish one.

Often the old frightened look would come over her face; and she would stare round in terror, as though she expected to see Lady Clarissa, or to hear her crabbed

keeper reprove her for indulging in any amusement, or to be chilled to stone by a glance of the hard, cold eye. Then Reginald would hold her to his heart, and warm her into life again, and smooth her brown hair caressingly, and seem to whisper words of comfort. When she smiled confidently in his face, he looked pleased and happy, and tried to divert her feeble thoughts to some other object.

"We have been here long enough, Mrs. Sweetman," said Oliver. "I could not refrain from showing you how much you were mistaken in Master Reginald; but it is not right to watch one's masters."

"I could watch him for hours," replied the housekeeper; wiping her eyes, "if I could only see for crying. And I'm sure there's no harm in looking at him now, God bless him!"

"He would not like it, ma'am," said

Oliver. "Besides which it would be a bad example if the other servants found us watching."

The last argument was conclusive, for Mrs. Sweetman entertained very exalted notions of her own dignity, and the duty that was incumbent on her of setting an irreproachable example to those under her orders.

When Reginald rang for tea, Oliver brought a message from Mrs. Grimston, the keeper, who wished to know if she should fetch Mrs. Hawkshawe to her own rooms. At the mention of this woman's name the poor lunatic clung to her stepson, and begged him not to let them take her away.

"Don't be frightened," said he, soothingly; "she shall not take you away. You shall stop with me, and I'll send Mrs. Grimston away, and you shall never see her again."

"Won't you send away the other one too?" said Mrs. Hawkshawe. "The old one—don't you know?"

And she pointed significantly across the table, and moved her eyes up by furtive starts as she used to do to Lady Clarissa's face.

"She is gone," replied Reginald; "she is dead. You will never see her again."

"Oh! I am so glad!" cried the lunatic, clapping her hands. "Then she can't make me look at her any more! And she can't look at me! I'm so glad! Is she buried?"

"Not yet," replied Reginald. "She'll be buried in a few days."

"Make haste and bury her," she whispered in his ear. "She's so tough, and so wicked, that she'll get up again if you don't."

"She shall not hurt you if she does,"

replied Reginald. "Tell that person," he said to Oliver, intimating Mrs. Grimston by a glance, "that I will speak with her presently, and desire Mrs. Sweetman to come here."

When the housekeeper entered, she was surprised to find Mrs. Hawkshawe (in a flurry of delight at the importance of the office entrusted to her) actually presiding at the tea-table.

It is true Reginald sat by her side, and guided her hand, lest she should scald herself with the boiling liquid; it is true also that he had to exercise a sharp *surveillance* over the other parts of the operation, or one cup might have been filled with cream and the other with sugar; but the idea was to her the same, *she* was making tea—*she* was being useful.

"Sit down, Mrs. Sweetman," said Reginald. "I have sent for you to ask a

favour of you, which I do not think you will refuse."

"Indeed, sir, you may be sure I won't, if it is anything that lies in my power to do," replied the housekeeper.

"I find that Mrs. Hawkshawe's maid has behaved in a manner that is not at all what it should be," said Reginald, "and I shall be much obliged to you if you will undertake the office until I can find some one else. She will give you very little trouble, and in a few days I will take her to some more cheerful place."

"I'll do what I can, sir," replied the housekeeper, looking very anxious; "and as I said before, sir, if it's anything that I *can* do, you have only to say the word, as in duty bound. But I'm not over strong, sir, by reason I'm not so young as I was."

"Have you ever heard that any strength was required?" asked Reginald.

"No, sir, I can't say I have exactly," replied Mrs. Sweetman. "But I *have* heard of tantrums."

"The irritability caused by vexatious and unnecessary interference, that is all," said Reginald. "With kind and gentle treatment there is the utmost docility. Take my place here for ten minutes, and you will be able to judge for yourself. You will give Mrs. Sweetman a cup of tea, won't you, dear?"

"Oh, yes, yes," cried Mrs. Hawkshawe, pleased as a child at the notice he took of her, and the freedom he allowed. "Sit down, Mrs. Sweetman, sit down. I think I remember *you*," she added, staring at her visitor with a pained expression, "a long—long time ago!"

"You are forgetting the tea, dear," said Reginald, patting her face between his hands, and kissing her on the forehead. "I dare say you remember Mrs.

Sweetman, for she is a very old friend of ours ; so don't keep her waiting for her tea."

Having thus turned her poor brain from a dangerous subject, and set it on a right track, Reginald went out to speak to Mrs. Grimston.

The good old housekeeper was so deeply affected by her master's tender care of his unfortunate stepmother, that she could not restrain her tears. Mrs. Hawkshawe looked at her half in fear, half in curiosity, and pulled her handkerchief from her face.

It was years since she had seen a tear in human eye, nor had she shed one herself since she lost her reason. The sight moved her strangely. Wild convulsive sobs heaved her bosom, and she continued to stare yearningly in the old woman's kindly face and streaming eyes, while yet no "fellowly drops" moistened her own parched eye-balls.

Mrs. Sweetman read in that pallid upturned face and those dry, bitter sobs, such a passionate appeal for tender, womanly sympathy, that she folded the poor lunatic to her broad bosom, and held her there in a close embrace. Then the dried-up well-springs of that suffering and tortured heart once more overflowed,—with a violent gush at first, and passionate throes, but gradually calming down till the sobs came at longer and longer intervals, and at last she slept.

Reginald held but a very brief colloquy with Mrs. Grimston. He told her he had no doubt she had performed her office to the best of her ability, but being convinced that Mrs. Hawkshawe's case required a different mode of treatment, he should dispense with her future services, and requested her to leave the house the following morning as early as convenient, as her late charge had so great a dread of

her, that he thought it advisable she should not see her again.

The woman attempted explanations and remonstrances, and finding that plan of no avail, had recourse to another line of tactics—pretended to shed tears, and talked of her long and faithful services. Without any harshness, Reginald gave her plainly to understand that all this was of no use; and having paid her what wages she demanded, without any investigation of the correctness of her claim, left her with imperative injunctions to depart in the morning.

Mrs. Sweetman's kind heart having been completely gained by the unfortunate lady, Reginald found no difficulty in prevailing upon her to undertake the post left vacant by Mrs. Grimston's dismissal.

The plan he proposed offered many inducements besides, as he intended (if his opinion were supported by medical advice)

that Mrs. Hawkshawe should be removed from St. Osyth's, and travel about, wherever the doctors might think it desirable.

CHAPTER VII.

A MEETING AT THE GRAVE BY THE SEA.

A WEEK after the fire the double funeral took place. Reginald saw the remains of his father and grandmother consigned to the family vault, and when all was over he retreated to the lonely strip of beach, and shed a few bitter tears on the storm-beaten pile of stones beneath which his mother lay buried.

He thought of the sweet voice that had recited over her the same prayers that he had just heard read by the clergyman, and his proud heart was subdued. He leaned his brow against the rock, and prayed

fervently and with humble spirit that Ellen might be saved from danger.

A touch on the shoulder aroused him. It was John Lynch, his dark face expressing wild excitement, and his chest heaving from the speed with which he had descended the cliff. Reginald grasped his hand, and uttered the one word, "Safe!"

"Ay—ay—safe and well," replied the smith. "What has happened to her I cannot tell; but I've found her; and that, I suppose, is all you want."

"Are you sure you were not mistaken? Are you *quite* sure it was she?" asked Reginald, eagerly.

"Did you ever know me to forget any face I had once taken notice of?" returned the smith, with a smile of irony—"and *her* face too! Why anybody could remember *that*."

"And where is she?" inquired Reginald, "Tell me the whole tale from beginning to

end, as you used to do when I was a boy, John Lynch. Come—sit down, old friend, and don't miss a word of it."

They sat side by side upon a shelf of rock, and Reginald rested his cheek upon his hand, and his elbow on his knee, and gave himself up to the delight of listening to a tale of deeper interest than had ever held him silent and breathless in his boyish years.

"I told you," began the gipsy, "that I would be off upon the search myself, so I dressed myself in travelling trim, as you see," glancing down upon the ragged costume of a beggar, "and skirted along the coast. Plenty of shipwrecks I heard of, but no little boat, come ashore with a lady in it. I had no luck for five days; but yesterday, as I was prowling along a wide stretch of beach down in Devonshire, what should I see but a small boat lying above high water mark, bottom upwards! I didn't know her

at first in that position, but still there was a something about her that made me go nearer. Sure enough, it was your honour's little Wild-duck!"

"You are *positive* you saw Miss Maynard safe and well?" said Reginald, drawing the breath through his closed teeth.

"That I did, and no mistake," replied the smith.

"Then go on," said Reginald.

"When I saw that boat I *was* confounded," continued the smith; "but then I sees she could not have got where she lay unless she'd been hauled up; and, thinks I, the same hands that hauled up the boat would be able to save the young lady; and then I thought of the life-belt, and mighty glad was I to see the marks of a large dog's feet on the sand. Off I sets to the nearest village, and on my way I met one of our people who told me he thought he had got a trace of her. He had heard of a lady being at a

farm-house about two miles off the sea, and he went begging to the house, but couldn't get a sight of her, because he saw the master, and he's so charitable, he never turns a beggar away empty, so there was no pretence for making a row, and bringing the folks out of doors. Well, as I had got Jem Bryce's experience to guide me, I made him show me the farm, and then I skulked about till I saw the master go out, and a fine Scotch sheep dog with him, and after that I saw the missus busy in the garden. I seized the opportunity, and cut away round to the back door, where I had seen a vinegar-faced servant maid just before. I knocked first, and then set up a dismal story about my wife and eight small children, all ill of the ague, with nothing to eat, and no money to pay for doctor or physic. Just as I expected, the cross maid came out, and began calling me a gipsy thief, and all manner of names. But of course I wouldn't stir for

that. It was just what I wanted; and the more she scolded, the more I whined; till at last the parlour-door opened, and who should come out but Miss Maynard herself! She was wrapped in a shawl, and looked very pale, and so weak she was obliged to hold by the wall, as she came along the passage. She said something to the servant that sounded like a reproof, but her voice was so faint I could not catch the words. And then she came forward and gave me a half-crown. Here it is," he continued, showing it suspended by a ribbon round his neck, "and here it shall remain as long as I live. I bored a hole in it as I came back here by the express train last night. And now that's all the story, Master Reginald, and I hope you are satisfied with what I have done."

"Satisfied!" repeated Reginald, "my good friend, I am more than satisfied. I am grateful—I am delighted! One more favour I

shall ask of you. To change that dress, and go with me to-morrow to show me the house. I have arranged all my affairs here in such a way that I can leave at a minute's notice. When you have got your own clothes on, my friend, come to the house and ask for me. We can then arrange about the trains and so forth."

He stood up, and remained for a few moments silent, with his eyes fixed on the ground. Then he extended one hand to the smith, and laid the other upon the cairn.

"You have removed a mountain from my breast, John," he said, "and when I forget your kindness, I shall have forgotten her whom we laid here in her last home. I may not have many more opportunities of speaking to you before I go, but be sure if I die on the field of battle, and have time to think at all, I shall remember your friendship. God bless you, John!"

He pressed his hand, turned quickly, and sprang up the rocky path.

“And God bless *you!*” said the smith, looking after him, “though as for not seeing me again, I don’t quite know about that. I should not like a soldier’s life, there’s too much confinement, and too many rules, and too many orders to suit my constitution. But something in the sutler line would do very well, I fancy; and there’s so many rascals take to that trade, I don’t see why I should not try it too. And then I can keep an eye upon him.”

After this soliloquy, the smith followed Reginald up the cliff, but before reaching the hermitage he turned off into a less-defined and more difficult track that led round the rock into the ravine.

CHAPTER VIII.

A TRUE GENTLEMAN.

ON the second evening after Ellen's escape from the Priory, the inmates of a farm-house on the Devonshire coast were assembled for evening prayer, in the large and comfortable parlour. The utmost order and decorum prevailed, for the master was respected, as much as he was beloved by his dependents.

Joseph Franklyn made no pretension to be a "gentleman farmer." He kept neither hounds nor hunters;—he did not even join the hunt;—but he *was* a gentleman for all that, and no occupation or mere outward

environment could have made him otherwise.

His face bore a singular resemblance to the portraits of Melancthon, and expressed a delicacy and refinement which his homely farmer's dress rather enhanced by the contrast. His head was lofty—as with such a face it must of necessity be—and the fine hair, turning grey and falling off at the temples, suffered the whole contour to be visible—a sight that would have filled a phrenologist with rapture.

He read the appointed chapter in a simple and unassuming style, but in a voice of extraordinary sweetness, and with an earnestness that never failed to rivet the attention of his hearers.

His wife sat beside him with great dignity, and felt proud of her husband, though she was weak enough—and a sad weakness it was—to fancy that no one but herself could see through his homely and unassum-

ing exterior, and appreciate the sterling goodness of his character. She did not comprehend that others, as well as herself, must see that such a man as she had the happiness to call husband would ennoble any station of life. To her—in her own private judgment—he was a gentleman in the best sense of the word; refined in thought and feeling—deeply, but unobtrusively religious; just, charitable, and true. No coarse expression, no outburst of anger, ever sullied his lips. The drinking bouts of the neighbouring farmers had no attractions for him; and while the best that his house contained in cellar or larder was set before them when they came under his own roof, he systematically refrained, on all possible occasions, from joining in their parties, which were never considered to have been properly and hospitably concluded unless every male guest went away considerably the worse for liquor. Yet, with the fullest appreciation of

his worth, Mrs. Franklyn did not give others credit for the same discernment, but thought that, to all the world besides herself, he was a mere plain farmer. Nevertheless, in her inmost heartshe was proud of him, as she ought to be, and as no persons were present whose superior education or position might, to her foolish fancy, give them a right to sneer at him, she gave herself up with her whole soul to her devotions. At the close of the usual prayer Mr. Franklyn added a short extemporaneous one, for those who had been exposed to the "pelting of the pitiless storm" upon the treacherous sea, and his wife responded "Amen" in a broken voice.

"Go to bed, love," said Mr. Franklyn, kissing his wife, after the servants had dispersed, "you look sadly tired. I shall just step down to the beach again, to see if there is anything to be done. But don't you sit up. I'll take the key."

"You talk of stepping down to the beach,

as if it were only a two minutes' walk, instead of a long two miles," said his wife.

"Nay, nay, love," he interrupted, smiling, "not more than a mile and a half."

"Well, whatever it is," said his wife, "you have been down three times to-day already, and surely that is enough."

"I shall feel much more comfortable if I go again," he replied. "It is all very well to pray for the sufferers under a comfortable roof, and safe from all danger; but to my way of thinking such prayers are an insult to Providence, unless we follow them up by *doing* as well, whatever lies in our power to do."

"I see you are determined to go," said Mrs. Franklyn, "so it's no use to argue with you. But pray take Richard with you. It is so late to go alone along that dreary road."

"Richard is tired, love," returned Mr. Franklyn.

"He has not had so much to tire him as

you have, dear," replied she; "and the long and the short of it is, that if you go for your own pleasure, Richard must go for mine; for if you go by yourself, I shall be miserable till you are safe back again."

"Well, well," said her husband, "Richard shall go; so make your mind easy."

The man was not very willing to leave the bright kitchen fire for the dreary night out of doors; but to accompany such a master for the satisfaction of so kind a mistress, he concealed any feeling of reluctance, and started off without a word.

The moon was shining bright when they reached the shore.

"There beant nought on the water, maister," said Richard, in his broad west country dialect.

"No," responded his master, scanning the expanse of the rolling sea with more attention, "I am thankful to see no signs of

wreck. But the damage must have been fearful in many parts."

"What's the dog about?" said Richard, pointing to the Scotch sheep dog, which had just dashed into the waves with a wild cry.

"He has found something," exclaimed Mr. Franklyn, running down the sands. "Good heavens! It is a human body!"

"And there be a booat, too," said the man, "turned roight over!"

Mr. Franklyn ran into the water to assist the noble dog in bringing the drowned person ashore. It was a woman with long brown hair that floated on the water like sea-weed. She was perfectly insensible, but as the boat was so near, and she was supported by a swimming belt, it seemed possible that life might be not yet extinct. At considerable risk of being swept away by the tumultuous waves, the master and dog brought the inanimate body to the

dry beach, while Richard had contrived to do nearly the same by the boat.

"Never mind the boat!" cried Mr. Franklyn. "Come here, Richard, and help me to carry this woman to the house."

"Lor, sir!" said Richard, "she be dead. It beant no mortal use to carry a copse up to the house. Best leave her safe on the sands, and send the folks with a cart for her. They'll hold the crowner's quest in your house, and give the missus a world of trouble."

"Dead or alive, she rests under my roof this night," said the master, resolutely, "and if you will not carry her, I will. She is warm yet, and I feel sure that she still lives."

"Lor! do'ee though?" said the man, now really interested in the fate of the drowned person. "Give her to I, sir. I can carry her best by myself. Thee beant over strong."

This was true. Mr. Franklyn was a slightly made, and rather delicate man, but he would have overtaken his strength to perform a duty. The clown, who was a giant in strength and limbs, took the insensible girl in his arms like a baby, and carried her with ease, holding her close to him, that his warmth might help to restore her.

The dog ran on before, and by his scratching and barking had aroused every one in the house before his master presented himself. Mrs. Franklyn was sitting up till her husband's return, and had fallen asleep by the fire; but when she opened the door, and found the dog alone, and in a state of violent excitement, she drew the very natural inference that some calamity had happened, and uttered a shriek that brought all the servants down stairs in alarm. In a few minutes the sound of her husband's voice re-assured her.

"All's right, Eliza!" he shouted, "make up the fire! We are bringing some one home!"

All was hurry and bustle in a moment. The bellows were at work, blankets were fetched, and water was set on to boil, by the time that the master entered, followed by the stalwart carter, bearing his dripping charge. She was laid before the fire, and while Mrs. Franklyn and her maids divested the seemingly lifeless girl of her clothes, and wrapped her in hot blankets, the other man was sent for a doctor. Richard meanwhile reposed himself in the parlour, and Mr. Franklyn changed his apparel, which was wetted completely through by the sea water.

"May I come in?" said the master, tapping at the kitchen door. On receiving an answer in the affirmative, he entered. "Are there any signs of life?" he asked.

"There is warmth about her heart and

stomach," replied his wife, "and just now I thought I felt a slight movement of the pulse. Oh! Joseph!" she added, pressing his hand, "how thankful I am that you would not let me persuade you to stay at home to-night!"

"That will do, dear," said he, returning the pressure with interest. "I wish the doctor would come."

Mrs. Franklyn neglected nothing that seemed likely to assist in restoring the sufferer;—piles of blankets, bottles of hot water, mustard plasters to the feet and stomach, till at length a faint respiration was discoverable, and by the time the surgeon arrived, the patient had even swallowed a teaspoonful of wine. After some hours of careful attendance, he pronounced that her recovery was no longer doubtful. She was put into bed, and left to sleep.

Early the next morning he came again.

The patient was too weak to speak, but she opened her eyes and looked at him, smiled faintly at Mrs. Franklyn, seemed grateful for the kindness she received, took some nourishment, and slept again.

"It is strange that she should be out on the sea, alone in that little boat," said Mr. Franklyn, as they talked the matter over with the doctor down stairs.

"She is quite a lady," said his wife, "I can see that from her clothes."

"Have you found out her name?" asked the surgeon.

"Maynard," replied Mrs. Franklyn, "Ellen Maynard is marked on her pocket-handkerchief, and E. M. or E. Maynard on her linen."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Henderson, taking a newspaper from his pocket, "then I think I have a clue to the discovery of her identity. Look here, Franklyn! there was a Miss Maynard, a governess, supposed

to have been killed at St. Osyth's, in that dreadful fire, when Mr. Hawkshawe and his mother Lady Clarissa were burnt to death. Here is the evidence before the coroner. Miss Maynard is missing. What is more probable than that the poor girl, frightened out of her senses by the fire, should get into a boat, and so be carried out to sea, and by God's Providence, cast ashore just on the very spot that you, you good Samaritan, had taken under your charge!"

And he clapped his friend on the shoulder as he spoke.

"And I tried all I could to keep him at home!" said Mrs. Franklyn, with a quivering lip.

"Hush!" whispered her husband. "I think you are quite right in your conjecture, Mr. Henderson; it accounts for her being out by herself; and it is not likely that two young ladies of the same

name would be lost and found within fifty miles of each other in so short a time."

"Had we not better send and let them know she is safe?" suggested Mrs. Franklyn.

"Why, I think not," said the doctor, "as we have at present only strong presumptive evidence of her being the same lady. Besides she is not a member of the family, and in a day or two she will be able to act for herself."

So it was decided that nothing should be done in the matter, and Reginald was kept in suspense for some days longer till informed of Ellen's safety by his gipsy friend.

On the occasion of John Lynch's visit to the house, Ellen heard from the servant's words that there was a gipsy at the door, and for love of one who had some of the

dark blood of that wild race in his veins, she crawled out to speak a word of kindness, if she had strength to utter it, and at all events to relieve his distress.

The next evening she persuaded her kind host and hostess to go to a meeting, which she accidentally discovered they had been long engaged to attend. Before setting out Mrs. Franklyn had a fire lighted in the parlour to keep her company, and Ellen lay on the sofa, thinking sadly of the past, but not venturing to dream of the future.

She had asked no questions about the fire at St. Osyth's Priory, not feeling strong enough to bear the confirmation of her fears, and being also unwilling to subject herself to any questions for the present. It was growing dark, but the fire burned brightly, and she had just refused the servant's offer to bring candles. A nightingale was singing in a tall tree in

the garden, and the sweet sounds floated in at the open window along with the odours from the flower beds. She was thinking of Reginald, when, attracted by that magnetic sympathy which she had often felt before, she raised her eyes to the window, conscious that some one was looking at her. It was Reginald's face—seen for one moment, and gone the next. A slight crunching of the gravel gave evidence that her sight had not deceived her. She tottered across the room, calling his name. There was no answer. When she reached the window no form was visible; but as she turned away, her eye was caught by a small packet lying on the window-sill. She brought it to the fire. It was directed to her in Reginald's well-known bold, rough characters. She opened it—it was Frank Willoughby's portrait, which she now recollected had been left on the floor where Mr. Hawk-

shawe had flung it. Reginald had discovered her then—but how? A moment's thought settled the question—the gipsy beggar! Surely Reginald would write to her! How strange that he should come in that mysterious way, and disappear without saying a word. Again she examined the paper in which the portrait had been wrapped—the poor portrait itself, I am sorry to say, did not get a second glance. In vain—there was not one word besides the direction.

When Mr. and Mrs. Franklyn returned, they found their invalid suffering from considerable nervous irritability. The next day she was worse, Mr. Henderson was sent for, and pronounced it to be low nervous fever. For several weeks she lay between life and death, and when at length the fever left her, she was so much reduced, that her recovery was as tedious as her illness.

CHAPTER IX.

LADY WILLOUGHBY ALTERS HER TACTICS;
AND MR. SMEDLEY TAKES A JOURNEY.

WE must now return to Lady Willoughby, who, in the meanwhile, had spent her time in alternate rounds of fashionable dissipation, and fits of hysterics, and other complaints of the nerves and imagination.

On the arrival of every mail from the Crimea Mr. Smedley was so regularly summoned to attend her ladyship, that he began to think he might as well go without waiting to be sent for; and taking the postman's and errand boy's duties as well as his own, put Frank Willoughby's letter

in one pocket, and the "Restorative Drops as before," in another.

He was heartily sick of her ladyship's whims and caprices; the case was wholly devoid of professional interest; and he would have given it up, but that he was thereby kept fully informed of Frank's movements and intentions, in which he felt a lively interest for the young man's sake; but still more for Ellen's. So he comforted himself by making Lady Willoughby pay well for her fits, and wrote again to Ellen, giving her all the gossip of the place, and the latest news of Frank, brought in quite incidentally. To his annoyance and vexation the letter was returned from the dead letter office.

He determined to set off as soon as his professional duties would allow, and make personal inquiries on the spot; but like many good resolves, whose execution depends upon some contingent "as soon

as," this journey was deferred week after week.

Towards the end of September a letter arrived from Frank; and the doctor was sent for as a matter of course. Lady Willoughby was less hysterical than usual; but the doctor's quick eye detected that her thoughts were busy upon some project which she endeavoured to conceal from him. Instead of giving him her son's letter to read through as usual, she folded down a part, and handed it to him. What he *did* see gave him food enough for reflection.

"A very singular fellow joined ours a few weeks ago. His name is Reginald Hawkshawe, of an old family in Cornwall. He has lots of money, having just come into his property on his father's death; but he don't know how to spend it, I can see. He lives in the most abstemious manner, and seems to care

much more for his horse than for himself. He's not a miser, though, by any means, as more than one of our mess can testify. He will pay off any young fellow's gambling debts, on his giving a solemn promise not to touch cards or dice again. They call it taking Hawkshawe's pledge. The men adore him already, and no wonder, for he is always doing something to improve their condition. Then his strength is so tremendous, and he never spares it. He will often bring a wounded man back from the trenches after undergoing fatigue that would have knocked up anybody else. I was quite done up two nights ago, so that I stumbled and fell; and before I could recover my legs Hawkshawe had got me on his back, and so marched me close up to our tents. He said he hoped the Fates would accept it in lieu of his having to bring me off wounded. He has taken me

under his special protection, and when it is my turn in the trenches he always spends a great part of the time with me. Notwithstanding his willingness to work, and the courage and spirit he displays when there is any skirmishing going forward, he is generally very melancholy. I think he has been disappointed in love; though how any girl could do other than accept such a fine, handsome fellow, I cannot imagine—and so rich too! She may be dead; but he is not the sort of fellow one can ask questions of, so I only guess at it. He has got all my love affair out of me, and Ellen's name is as pat on his tongue as possible. Do you know, mother, I think I was wrong to promise to give her up. Hawkshawe has set it in such a strong light before me that I really begin to think it would be a rascally shame to desert her. Give my kind regards to Mr. Smedley, and ask him to send me her

address. Hawkshawe has been talking to me again. Excuse the incoherency of this letter; it is so difficult to write at all, that nothing but the most desperate resolution carries one through. I have put no dates, for they would only confuse you. Sometimes a week has elapsed between the beginning of a sentence and the end of it.

“Hawkshawe has been at me again about Ellen. He says I never deserve a happy moment if I break my word with her. I fancy I can see a little into his own mystery through all this. I think he has broken faith with some one, and she has killed herself, or gone mad, or died, or something, and that is why he is so melancholy, and urges me so strongly not to bring a life-long reproach upon my conscience. I told him I had run through so much money, that I was very much embarrassed, and you wished me to mend my fortune by a rich marriage; but he said

that such a girl as Ellen would love me for myself, and not for my riches or position—in fact, one might suppose he had known her for years, he understands her disposition so thoroughly from my account of her. Poor fellow! his melancholy grows upon him. He has a firm belief that he will never return to England; but it is not *that* that weighs on his mind, for he came out on purpose to get killed. *I* don't think the metal is dug out of the mine that will wound him, for he seems to bear a charmed life, and we never hear of a man getting shot when he wishes for it. I wish you would ascertain whether Ellen has had any money left her. Hawkshawe throws out such strange hints on the subject."

The first line of the next paragraph, which Lady Willoughby had turned under, was just visible, and Mr. Smedley did not scruple to read it:—

"I have just found out, by his hints, what that strange fellow Hawkshawe means. He has made his"—— Mr. Smedley had no difficulty in filling up the blank with the word "will," and adding "in Ellen's favour;" but he was aided by a little previous knowledge.

"He writes in high spirits," remarked Mr. Smedley, returning the letter; "and I do not wonder that your ladyship is so much better, after receiving such a cheering epistle."

"I have been thinking a great deal about what the dear boy says respecting Miss Maynard," said the lady; "and really you know, doctor, I feel that I *ought* to study his wishes. One can never be sure," she added, putting her handkerchief to her eyes, "that each request may not be the last. Besides, Miss Maynard, poor dear girl! was always such an immense favourite of mine, that I really feel quite anxious

about her. Can you tell me her address, doctor? I wonder she has never written to me."

"I do not know where she is at present, madam," he replied. "I wrote to her at her former address, more than six weeks ago, and the letter was returned."

"Dear me! how very provoking!" cried her ladyship, with the eagerness of a whist-player, fearful of losing the odd trick; "we must find her out! Where was she when you wrote before?"

"She has sent me only one letter since she went away," said the doctor, evading a direct reply, "and it is evident she has left her then residence for good, or my last letter would not have been returned."

"Sweet girl!" sighed the lady, "we *must* find her."

"I am very anxious to know what has become of her," said Mr. Smedley, "and I think I may be able to do so; in which

case I will inform your ladyship. I am delighted to see you so much better, as I am compelled by urgent business to be absent for two or three days. I must now take my leave, for I have several visits to pay. A holiday is such an unusual event with me, that it requires a deal of preparation. Good morning, madam." And he bowed himself out.

He trotted briskly as long as he was within sight of the drawing-room windows, but as soon as he had passed the lodge gates he suffered his horse to walk, while many thoughts occupied his brain.

It may be remembered that the only letter from Ellen that had reached his hands was written immediately after Reginald's discovery of his father's perfidy respecting the former one, and it was natural that her pen should write something of what her heart felt so strongly.

She therefore told Mr. Smedley that she

occupied the position of instructress to Mr. Hawkshawe's son, whose education had been totally neglected, though he was far beyond the usual age for being under female tuition; and then she spoke warmly of the noble disposition which he evinced. At the time he supposed all this to refer to a boy of fourteen, or perhaps sixteen; but now strange doubts arose in his mind. He fancied she had said "Mr. Hawkshawe's *only* son," but of that he could not be sure till he had read her letter again.

Who then was this Hawkshawe who had suddenly appeared in the Crimea, and in Frank Willoughby's regiment—suffering under deep melancholy—interesting himself in Frank's fate—drawing out his love secret—persuading him not to abandon Ellen—and finally leaving her some property, which he felt convinced was the conclusion of the sentence of which he had read the first line? There was a singular

mystery in all this; and the only solution appeared to be in the existence of a character that was almost chimerical for its disinterestedness.

"Ay, ay," he soliloquized, as he rode gently along, "there's some money in prospect for Ellen, I am sure, and a good lump, too, or the old cat would not be so anxious about it. But this Hawkshawe puzzles me. Can it be the father? I must read her letter again, and see what light that will throw on the matter."

Setting spurs to his horse he was quickly at home. The cautious wording of Ellen's letter did not enable him to gather much from it, but it certainly was, "only son."

"Then this Crimean hero must be Hawkshawe, senior," he muttered, "or the deuce is in it. What! Ellen Maynard governess to a man old enough to hold a commission in her Majesty's army! No—I'll not believe that. But I can't wait for the morning

train. I'll start to-night. It will save me some hours, and I cannot rest till I have sifted this business to the bottom."

In passing through London Mr. Smedley called on Mrs. Mason; but that good lady had heard nothing of Miss Maynard since she was spirited away by that tall, dark man, with the fierce eyes. He started off by the Great Western, and the following day reached the village to which she had desired him to address his letter. On inquiring for John Lynch, he was told that he had left the place some months back, and was supposed to have gone to the Crimea.

His next question was respecting a Miss Maynard.

"Miss Maynard!" repeated his informant, the landlord of the village inn. "Why, mayhap that's the young lady that was burnt to death at St. Osyth's."

"Burnt to death!" exclaimed Mr. Smed-

ley. "Good heavens! Poor, dear girl! How dreadful! How and when did this happen?"

"Missus!" shouted the man, calling to his better half, "wasn't it Miss Maynard as was burnt at St. Osyth's?"

"Lawks sake, mun, no," she replied, appearing from the rear of the house; "it wasn't known for sartain sure that she were burnt. 'Cos you see, sir," curtseying to the strange gentleman, "her copse was never found."

"Is nothing known of her, then?" inquired Mr. Smedley.

"Nothing for sartain, sir," was the reply; "for you see when the Priory was burnt, and Mr. Hawkshawe and his mother were both killed, it made a great confusion, and in the midst of it, the young lady disappeared."

"Mr. Hawkshawe and his mother burnt!" exclaimed Mr. Smedley. "I have heard

nothing of that. What Mr. Hawkshawe was it?"

"The father of the present gentleman, sir," replied the woman.

"And was no search made for Miss Maynard?" inquired Mr. Smedley.

"Oh yes, sir," she replied. "They were digging in the ruins for days, I've been told. Mr. Reginald was up in London at the time of the fire, but he came down as quick as steam could go, and I'm sure it was a sight to see him the very night he got home, come galloping like mad to have a consultation with John Lynch, the blacksmith."

"By the same token," chimed in the husband, "John gave up his shop to his brother, and went off that very same night, and has never been seen in these parts since."

"Is his brother still living here?" inquired Mr. Smedley.

"Yes, sir," replied the man, "down at the smithy yonder."

"Is he a dark-faced fellow that looks like a gipsy?" was Mr. Smedley's next inquiry.

"He looks like what he is then, I reckon," said the landlord, grinning.

"I can make nothing of him," said Mr. Smedley. "I asked him several questions just now, and could get no satisfactory reply. He seems half a fool."

"Not he, sir, begging your pardon," said the landlord; "he's as 'cute a chap as there is between here and Lunnon. If he know's what you want, and why you want it, I daresay he'll tell you all about it."

"I'll try him again," said the doctor, dubiously, "though I fear it's of no use; and in the meantime I will trouble you, ma'am, to get me a chop, or something of that sort, ready for my dinner."

"Perhaps your honour would like a chicken, sir?" said the landlady.

"Anything you please, ma'am," returned Mr. Smedley; "only let it be ready as soon as possible."

Mr. Smedley found the smith smoking his pipe at the door of his shop, and he began, "I think, my friend, you can give me more information respecting Miss Maynard than any one about here, if you are disposed to do so. I have no evil intentions towards the young lady; indeed I am one of her oldest friends, and I was a friend of her father's before her."

"Be you a lawyer?" asked the man, sullenly.

"No, I am a surgeon—a doctor," replied Mr. Smedley.

"What name?" asked the smith.

"Smedley," replied the doctor.

"Why didn't you say so before?" exclaimed the smith. "Didn't you send a letter here once for her?"

"Certainly I did," replied the doctor, "or else I should not have dreamt of inquiring for her here."

"No, not at a smith's shop, I daresay,"

returned the smith. "It ain't much of a place for a young lady. Come in, sir, and I'll tell you where she is."

Mr. Smedley followed him into the little parlour, and there the gipsy wrote, in a much better hand than could have been expected, Mr. Franklyn's name and address.

"You see, sir," said he, giving the paper to the doctor, "I don't like answering questions unless I know why they are asked. It saves a deal of trouble sometimes, and I've got so into the way of it that I scarcely ever answer straight for'ards. Now that I know you are all right, I'll tell you what I know about her. When the Priory was burnt—at least one wing of it—Miss Maynard made her escape in a small boat, and as the weather was stormy she was drifted about all night and all the next day, and then she was picked up by this Mr. Franklyn. She has been at his house

ever since, very ill, and near dying; but she's getting better now; so if you are a doctor you can't do better than go to her."

"I *did* intend going to St. Osyth's to make inquiries there," said Mr. Smedley; "but I suppose they could tell me nothing more than you have already said."

"Not so much neither by a long chalk," replied the smith; "they know nothing about her."

"There is one more question that I should like to ask," said the doctor, "What was Miss Maynard's occupation at the Priory?"

"You'd better ask herself, sir," said Joe Lynch, with a sly smile; "how should I know anything about it?"

"Humph!" said the old gentleman, perceiving that Joe had fallen back upon his "know-nothing" system; "perhaps then you can tell me how many sons the late Mr. Hawkshawe had?"

"Can't say, sir," replied the gipsy, assuming an expression of hopeless stupidity ; "never heard."

Mr. Smedley laughed, thanked Joe for his information, and returned to the inn to dinner.

Being out of the way of the railroad, Mr. Smedley hired a conveyance, and late in the evening arrived at Mr. Franklyn's door.

At the sound of wheels the master came out, expecting to see one of his neighbours, and prepared to warn him to speak gently, lest he should disturb the invalid.

"I believe, sir," said the doctor, in a low voice, "that you have a young lady, Miss Maynard, under your roof?"

"I have, sir," replied the farmer, "and if you are a friend of hers, I am heartily glad to see you. She has been very ill, and we have not been able to obtain from

her the name and address of any of her relations, so that it has been quite impossible to communicate with them."

"She has no relations, poor girl," said the doctor. "I am only an old family friend. Has she never mentioned the name of Smedley?"

"That is the only name which she has mentioned," replied the farmer, "and she has several times wished Mr. Smedley were here. Have I the pleasure of speaking to him now?"

"Yes," replied the doctor, agreeably struck by the gentlemanly address and manners of Mr. Franklyn; "and, as a medical man, I hope I may be admitted to see her."

"I beg your pardon for not asking you to alight sooner, sir," said the farmer, while a bright blush overspread his mild features. "My reason for detaining you here was that I feared the sound of your voice might

reach Miss Maynard, and agitate her, for she is still very weak."

"I'd better ask a few questions before I present myself," said Mr. Smedley, stepping out of the chaise.

"Shall I wait, sir?" asked the postillion.

"Yes; I want you to take me to an inn," said Mr. Smedley.

"No! no! decidedly no!" cried Mr. Franklyn. "With your good leave, sir, you sleep here to-night. I cannot suffer you to go to the inn. Have you any luggage?"

"A carpet-bag," he replied; "but really—the trouble—what will your good lady say?"

"I daren't venture to think of what she would say if I were to let you go," said the farmer, with his soft sweet laugh; and grasping the bag he led the way into the parlour. "Miss Maynard is in what my wife calls her drawing-room," he said, closing

the door, and placing an arm-chair for his visitor, "and I think there is now no danger of her hearing your voice."

At Mr. Smedley's request he gave a full account of the way in which he had discovered Ellen, and of the illness into which she had fallen, after the doctor had pronounced her convalescent. In Mr. Henderson's opinion, he added, this had been caused by some nervous shock or fright, though they had never found out that she had been subjected to any. It was true she had been left alone on the evening when she was attacked by this fever, and might have had some slight alarm, but she would not own it.

"She is so feeble that a very trifling cause is sufficient to upset her," continued Mr. Franklyn; "for instance, a few weeks ago, when she had recovered so far as to be able to walk in the garden, she was thrown into excessive agitation by the sound of an

Eolian harp which my son had placed in his window. She imagined it to be a token of death to some friend, and could scarcely be convinced that the sound had a perfectly natural cause. And even though we satisfied her on that point, she had a relapse in consequence of the fright. I do not know whether a pleasurable emotion would be hurtful to her, but it will be best to keep on the safe side, and give her due notice before she sees you."

"Quite right—quite right," said the doctor. "By-the-bye, my dear sir, you must have been at considerable expense all this time. How has Miss Maynard been off for money? Her lawyer is a neighbour of mine, and if she had drawn upon him I am sure he would have told me. It was but the other day he was expressing to me his astonishment at not having heard from her."

"She had some money," replied Mr.

Franklyn, "and we have received some since from an anonymous friend. We have been rather in a dilemma about this, and I shall be glad to profit by your advice. This letter," he said, taking one from his pocket-book, "arrived here a few days after Miss Maynard was taken ill the first time. It contained Bank of England notes to the amount of a hundred pounds. Read it, sir."

Mr. Smedley adjusted his spectacles, and read as follows:—

"SIR,—The enclosed sum of £100 is placed in your hands by a friend of Miss Maynard's, for her use, and to remunerate you for your expenses on her behalf. For your kindness to her, all to whom she is dear will ever remain your grateful debtors. You must use your own discretion whether or not to inform her of this communication. The sender of it would prefer that it should be kept secret from her; but if any incon-

venience or unpleasantness should arise in consequence, you are at liberty to tell her that it comes from some property which she will shortly inherit."

"What would you advise me to do?" asked the farmer.

"What *have* you done?" was the counter-question.

"I have placed the money with my banker," said the farmer, "but have not mentioned the subject to Miss Maynard, as her medical attendant says she must be kept perfectly quiet, and we feared that the mystery of this business might agitate her. When she has expressed a wish to write to her lawyer for supplies, we have dissuaded her, and prevailed upon her to put it off. She *must*, eventually, be told of this money having been sent, or we shall be placed in the awkward predicament of receiving thanks and gratitude for services for which we have been paid at least fourfold, besides

the dishonesty of appropriating the whole of the money."

"*Property she will shortly inherit!*" said Mr. Smedley to himself, looking at the letter again. "Reginald Hawkshawe again for twenty pounds! Well, sir," he continued aloud, "I will, if you please, see our patient as soon as convenient. Perhaps you would just mention that an *elderly* friend wishes to see her. The idea of a staid old fellow is not so agitating to a young lady as the anticipation of a pair of military spurs clanking across the hall."

"I'll act upon your hint, sir," said Mr. Franklyn, as he quitted the room.

In a few minutes he returned, and conducted his guest into another apartment. Ellen started up from the sofa with a cry of delight, and, greatly to the old gentleman's astonishment, and perhaps also to her own, threw her arms round his neck, and sobbed like a child upon his shoulder.

"I thought it was you," she said, "but how did you find me out? Oh, I am so glad to see you! Not that I have anything but the kindest treatment here; you will not think I mean otherwise, dear, kind friends?" And she took Mr. and Mrs. Franklyn's hands. "You will not suspect me of such base ingratitude after all that you have done for me; but it is so pleasant to see an old familiar face—the only one that remained unchanged amid the wreck of fortune!"

"Nay—not the only one," said the good doctor, watching the effect produced by his words, as he would have watched the effect of some delicate operation; "there may have been others, or at least *another* that remained unchanged, though too far away for you to distinguish it."

"Possibly," said Ellen, in a subdued voice, "but I do not know—I have not heard."

Instead of the rosy blush which such an allusion might have been expected to call up, even on her pale cheek, there was an expression of pained embarrassment and shrinking.

“Hawkshawe again!” thought the doctor; “does she love him then? Yet if so, why did they not come to an understanding? I must get to the bottom of all this mystery.”

He sat beside Ellen on the sofa, and after about half an hour's chat, ordered her off to bed. She had given him only a very brief account of the manner of quitting St. Osyth's Priory. She was dreadfully alarmed, she said, on the night of the fire, and got into a boat in which she was carried out to sea, and drifted about till cast ashore near Mr. Franklyn's house. Mr. Smedley saw very plainly that there was a great deal more which she left untold, but reserved all cross-questioning till the next day. He spent another hour in pleasant conversation with

Mr. and Mrs. Franklyn, joined in their evening devotions, and retired to rest, pleased with the successful result of his journey, delighted with his new friends, but sorely puzzled concerning Ellen's relations with the Hawkshawe family.

CHAPTER X.

EXPLANATIONS AND BLUNDERS.

THE day after his arrival at Mr. Franklyn's the doctor took the opportunity of being alone with Ellen to say, rather suddenly, "Pray, my dear, what was the age of your pupil at St. Osyth's?"

"Oh, pray don't ask me, Mr. Smedley!" replied Ellen, showing now that if she did not blush the evening before it was not for want of blood to crimson her neck and face; "it was really quite shocking; but I was completely trepanned into it."

"What was shocking, my dear young lady? How were you trepanned? And

who trepanned you?" inquired the doctor, eagerly.

"No, no, I cannot tell you anything about it," she replied, turning pale and sick with horror, as her mind ran rapidly over all the circumstances, ending with the terrible conviction that poor Mrs. Hawkshawe had been poisoned, and probably burnt, to hide the deed of blood; "I cannot tell a part without relating the whole, and there are some things that must not be revealed, which I try not even to think of. Perhaps it was only a hideous dream. I'll try to believe so."

She uttered this in a low hurried tone, half speaking to herself.

"Can you tell me," she continued, but without looking at him, "whether any lives were lost in the fire?"

"Yes, Mr. Hawkshawe and his mother were both killed," he replied.

"Mr. Hawkshawe and Lady Clarissa!"

repeated Ellen, looking up with a face in which horror and delight struggled strangely for mastery; "then their blood cannot come upon my hands, say what I may. Heaven's justice has overtaken them! And Mrs. Hawkshawe—is she dead too?"

"No," said Mr. Smedley; "I was told that her son had placed her under the care of a person who had been the housekeeper for some years, and that she was travelling about for the benefit of her health. What is amiss with her?"

"She is insane," said Ellen, with a distracted air, which might easily be mistaken for deep sadness. She was thinking how to frame a question respecting Reginald, but Mr. Smedley interpreted her look and tone very differently.

"Insanity in the family!" he thought, "and therefore they would not marry. Quite right—quite proper—but, poor young souls! what a heavy trial!" He had, as he

thought, solved the mystery at last. "It is odd," said the doctor aloud, "that you should ask me about the incidents connected with the fire, when I only learnt them myself since I came into this part of the country. The catastrophe was doubtless detailed in the daily papers, but I have not often leisure to read them, and the home news has little attraction, beside the latest intelligence from the Crimea."

"I have not dared to ask," replied Ellen, "for I dreaded to hear something that would have brought a burthen upon my conscience like the guilt of blood."

"Will you not confide in me?" said the old gentleman, taking her hand. "An experienced head may guide you better than the quick impulses of your own young brain, however conscientious in its judgments. Believe me, my dear, I do not ask this out of curiosity, but from a wish to serve you."

"Of that I am sure," she replied, "and under a solemn promise of secrecy will tell you all."

"I give you my word never to divulge what you are going to say," replied the doctor.

She then related all that had occurred since the period of her arrival in London; only suppressing any allusion to Reginald's attachment to her, as well as to the feelings which she could no longer disguise from herself that she bore towards him. In the course of the narrative Mr. Smedley learnt that the insane Mrs. Hawkshawe was not Reginald's mother; and consequently, that his supposed solution of the mystery was not the correct one.

"Off the scent again!" he thought: "but I am glad *that* was not the reason. All may go right yet."

He sneered of course at the boding of the Grey Maiden, but instantly connected

it with the fact of her suffering a relapse at the sound of an Eolian harp, and concluded, rightly enough, that she had feared it was the Death Wail for Reginald.

The account of the preparation of the poison interested him deeply; though he could not guess, from her description, of what nature it might be.

“Let us hope that the baleful secret expired with her,” he said; “and now, my love, try to banish from your mind all recollection of these horrible events. Heaven has taken their punishment into its own hands, and as the crime was not actually perpetrated, the knowledge of guilt need not oppress you. The son appears to be a noble fellow, and will atone amply for his father’s faults.”

“He is, indeed, all that is good and noble,” said Ellen, with enthusiasm.

“Then you do not hate him for his father’s sins?” suggested the doctor.

"Oh, no ! that would be gross injustice," said Ellen. "Besides, what do I not owe to his kindness and forethought!"

"Yes—he's doubtless a fine fellow," said Mr. Smedley, "and makes a good officer, it seems."

"Is he, then," faltered Ellen, trying to look indifferent—"is he—has he been—mentioned—in the papers?"

"Yes—favourably mentioned, more than once," replied the doctor. "I have heard of him besides through a private channel. He is, singular to say, in the same regiment as Frank Willoughby, and has cemented a strong friendship with him. He has paid off Frank's gambling debts, shares and relieves his duty in the trenches, and watches over him like a brother. I am glad you have no dislike to him, for, being such fast friends, he is sure to be invited to

Willoughby Court, and you could not avoid seeing him."

Mr. Smedley was obliged to desist, for the victim of his cruel experiment was falling from her chair.

"You have talked too much," he said, assisting her to the sofa, and holding a glass of wine to her lips. "Now you must lie quite still for an hour, and to remove the temptation to talk out of your reach, I'll go and have a chat with our good friend Mr. Franklyn."

In the afternoon Ellen was better and stronger, and when Mr. Smedley, after a long consultation with the other surgeon, urged the advisability of change of scene, and also the benefit likely to be derived from her native air, adding (by way of experiment) Lady Willoughby's affectionate inquiries, she readily agreed to his proposal to place herself for a few weeks under the

care of his housekeeper, a respectable, elderly widow, whose nursing talents were celebrated in the little town. He was rather puzzled by the pleased reception she gave to Lady Willoughby's overtures.

"Am I mistaken about Reginald?" said the doctor to himself; "and is she still fond of Frank? Who the deuce can read what is passing in a woman's mind, or comprehend her motives of action? Not I!"

With which soliloquy he left the question for time to settle.

Nothing occurred worth recording during the next three days, to which the good old doctor prolonged his stay at the farm. By that time Ellen's health was so much restored that she was able to undertake the journey as far as London, where she would remain with Mrs. Mason for a day, or longer, if needful.

When the time of her departure was

fixed, she consulted Mr. Smedley on the proper means of remunerating her hospitable entertainers for all the care they had bestowed upon her, and the expense they must have incurred on her account. Without telling her of the money that had been sent by her anonymous friend, who, he felt more and more convinced, was no other than Reginald Hawkshawe, he assured her that all that had been satisfactorily and handsomely arranged between her hosts and himself, and that when she was able to attend to business she should audit the accounts, and make all straight with him. Glad to escape from any unnecessary trouble, she gratefully adopted his arrangement, whatever it might be.

Ellen wept at parting with the kind friends whom Providence had raised up for her in her time of need, but promised herself the pleasure of speedily paying them another visit. The journey to London was

accomplished with less fatigue than might have been anticipated; and after one night spent at Mrs. Mason's, who was overjoyed to see her, she continued her route to her native town.

CHAPTER XI. .

LADY WILLOUGHBY CARRIES OUT HER
PLANS.

It was barely a year since Ellen had left her native place, but what a change had come over her feelings in that time! How the placid and childish love which she had felt towards Frank Willoughby had been swept away by the tyrannous control of a far sterner and loftier character than his;—a control that she *could not* resist, which mastered her whole being and her every faculty, and compelled her love and admiration, in spite of all her efforts to assure herself that she was still faithful to her early attachment.

"The place is not much altered," observed Mr. Smedley, as they drove in from the railway station, in his gig.

"To me it seems very much changed," she replied; "I cannot point out where or how, only that it seems smaller."

"Your ideas have become more expanded," said he, with a smile; "I dare say you will not find Willoughby Court looking less stately than usual."

"I shall not very soon be able to bear the fatigue of going there, I fear," said Ellen.

"Nor would I advise it before her ladyship calls upon you, my dear," returned Mr. Smedley. "We must keep up our dignity, and she owes you the *amende honorable*."

"I cannot quite understand her," said Ellen, with a half-contemptuous smile. "Has there been any news of my father's unworthy cousin having realized a fortune

in Australia, and died, leaving it to me? Nothing less could fully account for the change in Lady Willoughby's behaviour."

"She is a very weak and capricious woman," said the doctor, "and we must never expect to find sufficient motives for the conduct of such people. By Jove! the most reasonable of your sex are difficult enough to understand, without wearing one's brains to shreds in the effort to discover what such simpletons as my lady are driving at."

"You are in one of your complimentary moods, I see, doctor," said Ellen; "but pray keep a pretty speech to pronounce as I cross your threshold, for here we are at the door."

"Do you find any change here, my dear young lady?" asked Mr. Smedley.

"Yes," she replied, smiling affectionately at his pleased face as he handed

her out, "yes—it looks more home-like and comfortable than ever!"

Her first impression proved to be correct, for she was at once installed in full possession of every luxury afforded by the doctor's comfortable, but not ostentatious establishment.

As soon as Lady Willoughby heard that Ellen was in the town, she drove over to see her.

The first interview was highly diplomatic on both sides; though Ellen kept wholly on the defensive or negative system, keeping quiet and saying little, on the plea of her weak health. By this means the visitor had far the greater share of the conversation to herself, and Ellen was enabled to form some guess at the nature of her manœuvres, and their object. There was a superabundance of professions of personal regard, and fulsome terms of endearment; but not the slightest allusion to the rela-

tionship in which they might one day stand towards each other. There were many very friendly plans for the fut—visitsure, to the metropolis, introductions to society under her ladyship's chaperonage; but no word of the preparations for her marriage.

Ellen's heart was no longer interested in the matter, and therefore her head was cool and collected enough to mark all these details with considerable accuracy, and to draw her own conclusions from them. The result of these was that Lady Willoughby wished to keep on perfectly good terms with her, but to pledge herself to nothing; in order that, on some turn of fate of which Ellen could not guess the nature, she might be free either to press the marriage, or to treat it as a subject that had never been under serious discussion.

Ellen felt no compunctious visitings of conscience at meeting her visitor in her

own spirit, using against her the same weapons which she employed, and obtaining, through Frank's letters to his mother, intelligence of Reginald.

And what of Frank, in the meanwhile? How far was he implicated in his mother's disingenuous proceedings? On that point she could not wholly satisfy herself. Lady Willoughby read portions of Frank's letters to her, but they related entirely to the movements of the army, and their sufferings during the terrible winter of '54 and '55. Sometimes Ellen was given to understand, by a sudden stop and some humming and ha-ing, that there was an allusion to herself which the reader thought it best to suppress. But Ellen was too clear-sighted not to see through the manœuvre which let the existence of this allusion be guessed at; while by not reading it aloud, the artful woman could not be accused of encouraging, or even acknowledging the

engagement, should circumstances render it politic to break it off.

“Yes!” thought Ellen, “she wishes to keep alive my affection for her son, that I may be ready to marry him, in case some change of fortune should render it desirable. She does not care for the other side of the question. It is nothing to her that the hopes she strives to nourish may be crushed, and that with them my heart may be broken, and my life blighted. Poverty and sorrow may be *my* lot. And this is her friendship!”

But by far the most interesting portions of Frank's letters were those in which he spoke of his friend Hawkshawe. Ellen had kept secret from Lady Willoughby the name of the family in which she had resided during the year of her absence, leaving her even ignorant that she had been in a situation at all; and she had asked Mr. Smedley to observe a similar silence upon

this topic. The concealment was much facilitated by her ladyship, whose purpose it served to ignore all such matters in case the marriage should take place. She therefore asked no questions, and Ellen was much amused to find that it had been industriously circulated throughout the town that she had been on a visit to some friends of Mr. Smedley's in Devonshire. This was easily traceable to the doctor's having made some casual remark in Lady Willoughby's presence, touching "Our friends the Franklyns."

"I do not think," said Ellen, as she talked the affair over with her medical friend, "that I become an accomplice in a falsehood by not denying a silly report. I shall therefore let it pass. It is none of my inventing, and I am not bound to refute it. If people will talk of what does not concern them, they must expect sometimes to hear falsehoods as well as truth."

"But this is not wholly a falsehood," said the doctor. "You certainly *were* at the Franklyns for some time; and as to their being friends of mine, I trust they will continue so to the end of the chapter."

"Then I shall let this report go uncontradicted," replied Ellen. "It will serve my turn, by saving me the trouble of repelling impertinent inquiries, made under the mask of friendship."

"How bitter you are against our town-folks!" cried the doctor. "I did not imagine there was so much causticity in your composition."

"My memory is not so short that I should set much value on their present professions," replied Ellen. "I see that they are all led by the same idea, that I am about to become possessed of some property. I wish it would make haste and come!"

"Perhaps it cannot come to you before the death of its actual possessor," observed

the doctor, turning away, and looking out of the window.

A thought flashed across her brain—could it be? The doctor was known to be wealthy—he was a bachelor, without any near relative—he treated her like a father.

“If it be so,” said Ellen, “I wish that wish un-wished with all my heart.”

“That I am sure you do,” said the doctor; and he ran down stairs to a patient whom he saw coming to the door. “Poor girl!” he muttered, “she little guesses at the truth!”

But she had guessed at a fiction which had the salutary effect of giving repose to her mind, during which her bodily health and strength were rapidly restored.

During that long and dreadful winter she had constant news of Reginald through the unconscious Lady Willoughby, with whom she was by this time on the most friendly terms; and she was sustained also by a super-

stitious belief that Reginald would not die without the Death Wail being heard by her.

On the terrible night of her escape from St. Osyth's the mournful sounds had accompanied her for miles on her lonely voyage, and would they fail to warn her of *his* death?

In the spring Ellen agreed to accompany Lady Willoughby to London, to be introduced into society. This, at least, was her ostensible motive; but the real one was that she might have the opportunity of meeting with officers home on sick leave, who had seen and spoken to Reginald. Many such she met with, but her appetite for such news was insatiable, and she went more and more into society to gather intelligence, of which she never wearied.

One morning a letter arrived from Frank; and Ellen, with ill-concealed anxiety, awaited the usual reading of a portion of it. Lady Willoughby read it, folded it up, and looked thoughtfully at the direction.

"Good news, I hope?" said Ellen, at length.

"Oh yes! Excellent!" replied her ladyship; "but, my dear child, I don't know how to read it to you! It's positively all about yourself; and you know it does seem so odd to write a love-letter through another person! I told him you were staying at Smedley's, and had promised to come to town with me for the season, and the poor fellow is quite wild with joy. He is coming home on sick leave, having been slightly wounded, and not very well in other respects; and he begs me to have everything in readiness that the marriage may take place a week after his arrival!"

"What marriage?" asked Ellen, coldly.

"You little prude!" said her ladyship, playfully pinching her cheek; "pretending not to know, indeed! However, as the bride-elect is just your height and figure,

we will get you to let the milliners take your measure for the *trousseau*."

"I should think," said Ellen, calmly, "that Captain Willoughby will be too much occupied in re-establishing his health, so as to be able to return to his duty, to think of getting married in such a hurry."

"Marriage will be the cure, my love," replied her ladyship, laughing. "The naughty boy's principal ailment is love-sickness, and there is no remedy like matrimony for that complaint."

"And can he suppose that the lady will feel flattered at his deserting his country's cause for her sake?" said Ellen.

"Of course she will!" replied her ladyship. "Women are always flattered in proportion to the extent of the sacrifice that is made for them. But I must leave Frank to plead his cause for himself. I have too much to do now in preparing for his return."

Would Ellen's feelings have been so completely Spartan on this occasion if she had preserved her attachment to Frank Willoughby? Let us hope that they would, though they would probably have taken a very different appearance. Instead of expressing a quiet opinion, as if for another person, she would have shed tears of mortification and regret. She would have written letters of remonstrance to meet him at every stage, urging him to return to the scene of duty and of danger, and vowing, if he persisted in his shameful retreat, to enter a convent, and spend the remainder of her days in penance for having been the cause of his disgrace.

Lady Willoughby did not half like the way in which her young guest fell into her own plan of treating the engagement as a thing that had never had an existence. She felt herself foiled with her own weapons, by one whom she had always considered a

complete novice. Perhaps Ellen was only taking a little girlish revenge; perhaps she was only coquetting a little, in order to be more ardently wooed afterwards. But how if she had by any means obtained an intimation of the principal news contained in Frank's letter—that Hawkshawe was killed, and that she—Ellen—was left sole inheritress of his large property? Smedley was the only person who could know anything of the matter; the question therefore was, "Had Ellen received a letter from Smedley that morning?" On inquiry she learnt that Miss Maynard had had no letters that morning; so, anxiously ruminating, she drove off to the War-Office to obtain a confirmation of Reginald Hawkshawe's death.

We must do Frank the justice to say that his letter was very different from what his mother chose to represent it. He told her he was quite doubled up with grief at

the loss of his friend; that his restlessness interfered with the healing of his wound; and that he had applied for, and obtained a promise of leave to return home to recruit his health. He only once alluded to the subject which his foolish mother said was the single theme of his letter. "Ellen is now wealthy," he said; "but I would rather have such a friend as Hawkshawe than a hundred wives, each with a hundred fortunes." In a postscript he added, "I forgot to tell you the nature of my wound, and I suppose you will be anxious to know. It is only a Minié ball through my right leg, but being close to the knee, it is awkward. Hawkshawe carried me back to the ambulance amid a perfect hail of rifle balls, so that it seemed a miracle that we were not both killed. He then ran back to the trenches, and it was in the command of *my* men, and doing *my* duty, that he lost his life. The service and the

world altogether could far better have spared *me*."

Foolish Lady Willoughby! With your caprices, and sophistications, and worldly-mindedness, you had made a tolerable clearance of all honesty of heart from your own nature; otherwise you would have comprehended that the sight of Frank's letter, with its expressions of genuine and natural feeling, would have impressed Ellen far more favourably towards him than the silly romance which you invented.

Ellen, disappointed at not hearing Reginald's name mentioned, took the *Times* to her favourite seat in the conservatory, and searched for news of him there. Too soon she found it in the list of killed! There could be no doubt about it. The details were too circumstantial. He had fallen in defending an advanced post, from which the allies were driven back for some hours. The next day they had recovered the

ground, and Captain Hawkshawe's body was found, stripped by the Cossacks, and the head frightfully mutilated by a cannon ball. Ellen read it all. She did not shriek, nor weep, nor faint, but sat like one who was stunned by a heavy blow. She knew nothing of the flight of time; she felt nothing but a dull weight of misery, and a sort of dread that when she was aroused it would be to suffer tortures more excruciating than she could bear. And so she sat for hours, till roused by Lady Willoughby's voice, calling her to take a drive.

"Why, my sweet pet!" exclaimed her ladyship, fresh from the agreeable confirmation of the news of Hawkshawe's death, "what ails you? How pale you look!"

"I have been asleep, I think," replied Ellen, passing her hand over her burning forehead. "I shall be better soon. Yes, I'll be ready directly."

Her maid attired her, and she went

mechanically to the carriage. The fresh air of Hyde Park revived her, but the unceasing turmoil, and the (to her then state of mind) ghastly phantasmagoria of faces decked in unmeaning smiles, that swept past like the files of antic shapes which often flit before the eyes in childhood, oppressed and annoyed her, and she longed for the pure air, the solitude, and the perfect quiet of the garden at St. Osyth's. But that wish and its attendant recollections were quickly and peremptorily banished, for behind them lay tears and shrieks of agony, which that was no place nor time to indulge in.

Be the story of the Spartan boy and his fox reality or fable, it shadows forth a terrible truth. How many poor mortals, who bear a calm brow and a smiling lip, carry their fox carefully hidden in their bosoms, and feel it gnawing at their hearts even while they utter complimentary

nothings to their merest acquaintances! With Ellen it was a strong instinct that first led her to conceal her fox; then when she could reflect at all, her reason approved what she had done, and she continued the same line of conduct.

She nerved herself to stoical endurance, looking forward, when she anticipated the future at all, to spending some time, perhaps the remainder of her life, under the peaceful shelter of Mr. Franklyn's roof. It was there that she had last seen Reginald, though the glimpse had been only momentary; and there she could mourn over his loss, unintruded upon by curious and impertinent questionings. The moderate sum which had been saved from the wreck of her father's property would suffice for her simple wants in such a home, though while with Lady Willoughby it only supplied her with pocket money.

She could not be said to have thought of

all this, but it passed vaguely through her mind as a consciousness that she could find a peaceful asylum when she chose to seek it. For the present, hateful as society and gaiety were to her, she went out more than ever, that she might meet with people who could tell her anything of Reginald. No one knew that she had ever seen him, and she schooled her looks and tones so successfully, that she was never suspected of being the deeply interested listener which she was.

CHAPTER XII.

WEALTH IS NOT ALWAYS WELCOME.

It was about a week after the first news of Reginald's death had arrived, that a stranger sent in his name at an hour too early for ordinary callers, desiring to speak to Miss Maynard on business. Ellen felt nervous and frightened, she knew not why. She half dreaded, half hoped, to hear something about Reginald. While she hesitated, Lady Willoughby, for they were still lingering over the breakfast table, glanced at the card, and directed that the gentleman should be shown into that room.

“You will hardly like to see a stranger

alone," she added, half apologetically, to Ellen.

If Ellen thought differently she had not time to say so before the stranger was ushered in. His business was quickly explained. Premising that she had no doubt heard of the death of his late client, Reginald Hawkshawe, Esq., of Hawkshawe Castle, —shire, and St. Osyth's Priory, Cornwall, he proceeded to state that the said gentleman had bequeathed to her the whole of his property, excepting the Hawkshawe estate, which was entailed, and that he was ready to place the will and other papers in the hands of her solicitor, unless she would honour him by leaving her affairs under his superintendence.

"Pray retain the papers, sir," said poor Ellen, and her voice sounded to herself as though it belonged to some one else, who was speaking at a distance under a vaulted roof. "they cannot be in better hands, I am

sure. I will call on you in a few days, if it is necessary; but at present I am not well; I cannot talk about business."

"Do you wish me to prove the will?" asked the lawyer.

"Whatever you like—whatever is necessary," said Ellen, to whose ears the word *will*—Reginald's will—was like a touch on a bare nerve. "I cannot speak more now; I feel really ill."

And she staggered from the room.

"Poor thing!" exclaimed Lady Willoughby, "she is quite overcome by the sudden news; and pray excuse the remark, but I think, sir, you communicated it *rather* abruptly."

"Was not Miss Maynard aware of Captain Hawkshawe's death?" asked the gentleman, in some consternation.

"Possibly," said Lady Willoughby; "I know nothing to the contrary; but no doubt she must have seen it in the papers."

That, however, could not have affected her, for she did not know him. He was acquainted with her only through my son's description of her."

"Indeed!" said the lawyer, dubiously; for he had read Ellen's agitation very differently. "May I ask how long your son and Captain Hawkshawe were acquainted, madam?"

"I cannot tell exactly," replied her ladyship; "but it was some time last autumn."

"They went out to the Crimea together, I presume?" continued the lawyer.

"No; the regiment had been out six months before Captain Hawkshawe joined it," said Lady Willoughby.

The gentleman thanked her ladyship for answering his questions, and took his leave, wondering what all this might mean. The will had been made before Reginald left London for the East.

When Ellen reached her dressing-room she locked the door, threw herself on her knees, and tried to pray, and tried to weep. But her brain seemed hardened, and she had repressed her tears so long that not one blessed drop would flow to save her from madness, or cause the fiend that was griping at her throat to relax his merciless hold.

An organ in the street began to play. It had a sweet and plaintive tone, and it played an air that Reginald used to love. Her sobs subsided. She knelt with her head resting on a cushion, and her eyes wandering dreamily over the chintz pattern of the sofa cover, mechanically tracing out the flowers. A sense of freshness came over her soul, and when the music ceased, she raised her head, and found that the cushion was soaked with tears.

She wiped her eyes, and sat down to write a letter. Refreshed by that genial shower,

a faint hope had raised itself in her heart.

"I do not believe that he is dead," she murmured to herself. "I am certain I should have heard the warning. If it was not heard at the Priory, I shall feel convinced that he still lives."

The letter she wrote was to Oliver, requesting him to inform her by return of post whether the Death Wail had been heard about the house since Mr. Reginald's departure. This letter she posted with her own hand, much to the astonishment of Lady Willoughby, who considered such an act anything but *comme il faut* in a young lady of fashion, and an heiress; but she was still more astonished when, three days after, Ellen received a letter directed in a stiff, old-fashioned hand, the contents of which seemed to give her great pleasure, though she maintained a profound silence on the subject. It was from Oliver, and ran thus:—

"HONOURED YOUNG LADY,—Thanks be to God, there has been no sound of the Wail since the night of the fire, which makes me feel very sure that the dreadful news we have heard from foreign parts is not true, but quite otherwise. Distance has nothing to do with the Wail, for it was heard very plain for my late master's brother, who died in India, which I am told is a great way further off than where Master Reginald is gone to.

"Please to excuse the liberty I take as an old servant of the family for forty years, to say how glad I am to hear that you are safe and well, as this leaves all here at present, thank God, and also we hear from Mrs. Sweetman that our poor lady gets on much better than could be expected, which is all Master Reginald's doing. Nobody thought any otherwise than that you had been burnt to death, unless it was my master—I mean Master Reginald, and he

sealed up your keys, and left them in my care in case you should come here for your clothes and things, which not hearing anything of you for so long a time, I never thought would be likely to happen. I will never believe that he is dead till I hear the Wail, and when that time comes I hope I may be permitted to lay my old head in the corner of the churchyard. So no more at present from your humble servant to command,

OLIVER CLARK."

After receiving this letter Ellen went with a firmer heart to the solicitor, and astonished him by saying she felt very confident that Captain Hawkshawe still lived. Not wishing, however, to be put into a lunatic asylum, she refrained from communicating to him the grounds of this belief. She desired him to act with regard to the property exactly as he had done before he received the report of Reginald's death.

"But, my dear madam," said the lawyer, frowning in perplexity, "this is something beyond a report. Here are the proofs."

"I cannot look at them," said Ellen, turning away her head; "manage all as you have done till the expiration of one year. If he should not re-appear by that time——" Her voice failed her, and she stopped; then recovering her self-possession, she added in a decided tone, "Let me hear nothing of it till that time, if you please."

"But the entailed estate," said the lawyer; "you cannot put off the heir-at-law as you defer your own claims."

"Of course if you are satisfied with these proofs you must give that up," said Ellen. "I have no control over it. You must act for yourself. I may perhaps ask permission to go to St. Osyth's for a short time, but I am not sure."

"You have only your own permission to ask, Miss Maynard," returned the lawyer.

"I can go then when I will," said Ellen.

"Certainly," he replied; "but I must claim your attention to one point before you go, as there is a proviso in the will which it is important that you should be acquainted with. When you marry, the property is to be strictly settled on yourself."

"That is a very important proviso indeed!" said Ellen, with a hollow laugh, as she turned to depart.

CHAPTER XIII.

FRANK'S RETURN, AND MORE EXPLANATIONS.

ON her return home Ellen could not but be aware of a certain briskness about the servants, as though something at once agreeable and important had happened. But as it could not concern Reginald, she felt no interest in it, and was ascending the stairs to her own apartment when the drawing-room door opened, and Lady Willoughby, seizing her by the hand, exclaimed, "Prepare for a delightful surprise!"

"Is he come back alive and well?" cried Ellen, clinging to the balusters for support.

"Yes, he is well—quite well," said her ladyship, "but frightfully thin; though looking so handsome!"

"Fool!" was the thought that shot through Ellen's mind, almost ere her tongue had spoken, "she does not mean Reginald!"

"Come in—come in! He is here in the drawing-room," said her ladyship.

"You are speaking of Captain Willoughby," said Ellen, as though she had just made a discovery; "how silly of me to make such a mistake!"

"Who *should* I mean but Frank?" said her ladyship. "Who *could* you be thinking of; you naughty girl?"

"It is immaterial," replied Ellen, calmly, as she accompanied Lady Willoughby into the drawing-room. "I was about to hope that your son is well, madam; but one cannot expect any officer to be in health, if he returns from the Crimea."

"He is much improved by his voyage,"

said her ladyship, biting her lip with vexation, "but he is far from well even yet."

Frank was lying on a sofa, but started up on their entrance, and advanced to meet Ellen as if about to clasp her in his arms; but she gave him her hand with an air of dignity that repelled all such familiarity. Her heart beat violently (as what young girl's would not?), but she preserved the outward appearance of composure.

"You are very much changed, Ellen!" said Frank.

"I can return the compliment, if it be one," she replied.

"I do not mean in appearance," said Frank, "but in manner."

"That change did not begin with me, Frank," she replied. "I appeal to your mother——" But Lady Willoughby had slipped out of the room, thinking they would get over the first explanations best

without a witness. "However, as she is gone I will say nothing about her in her absence."

"What can have happened?" said Frank. "You are surely not the same Ellen that I used to know! She was all love and gentleness, while *you* are cold, severe, and stern. Tell me what I have done to make you change so suddenly."

"The change that it has taken a year and a half to accomplish, cannot be very sudden," said she.

"But your messages sent through my mother——"

"I have sent none," interrupted Ellen.

Frank bit his lip with an air of vexation.

"For the last six months I have not had a letter without one," said he.

"Then the less you say of conduct so disgraceful, the better," replied Ellen. "I am compelled, in justice to myself, to repeat

that I have never sent, nor even tacitly authorised the sending, of any message to you. And you, Frank," she continued, attacking him in return, "*you*—who wonder if I can be the Ellen of former years—can *you* be the generous-hearted Frank who was the playmate of my childhood? Would *he* have so soon forgotten the death of his best friend, and hurried home, under a false plea of indisposition, to clutch at that friend's wealth by means of an indelicately hasty marriage?—a marriage too with one whom he and his mother had both systematically slighted while she was poor?"

"There is something that wants clearing up here," said Frank, while his brow flushed, and his lip trembled; "and, though it's a dreadful thing to be compelled to blush for one's own mother, I very much fear, when all is made straight, and the saddle is put on the right horse, that is what it must

come to. You say that I systematically slighted you when I knew you had lost your parents and your fortune. Now, I swear that I wrote dozens of letters to you. Some I sent enclosed to my mother, some I sent through the post. Those sent by post were returned, and my mother assured me that after the death of your parents you desired our correspondence should cease, and that you had broken off our engagement. I was involved in debt through extravagance and betting, and I felt angry with you, and turned sulky, and so the matter rested. Then when Hawkshawe came out, he got the whole affair from me, I don't know how; and he saw it all in a very different light, and said that such a girl as I described you to be, would not change her mind in that way. He said it was very likely that when you lost your fortune, you would throw up the engagement, to give me the power of retreating

handsomely, or of showing the sincerity of my affection by seeking you anew. I can't tell you half the arguments he used; but when he had worked upon me to such an extent that I was fully resolved upon seeking to renew our engagement, and had written to my mother begging her to find out where you were, he then told me he thought I was worthy of you, and that he would make us comfortable, and smooth away all family objections, by leaving his disposable property to you, having a strong presentiment that he should be killed."

"And when he was killed," said Ellen, reproachfully, "you sent a fulsome love-letter *at* me, through your mother, and scarcely mentioned the loss of your noble friend!"

"Did she read that letter to you? Did you see it?" he demanded, eagerly.

"No," replied Ellen, "it was too much even for *her* maternal vanity."

"Stay here till I come back," said Frank;
"promise not to stir!"

"I will remain," said Ellen.

As Frank limped out of the room, Ellen wished she had spoken less harshly to him, and when he returned she was at the door to give him her arm to lean on.

"Thank you," he said, as he resumed his seat on the sofa, and with a slight contraction of the brow placed the wounded limb in a horizontal position. "I have got this *love-letter* from my mother. Read it, but I warn you there is nothing in it to flatter feminine vanity."

"How long has Lady Willoughby been aware of Reginald's intentions?" asked Ellen, when she had perused the letter.

"*Reginald's?*" repeated Frank, in amazement.

"Captain Hawkshawe's, I mean," said Ellen.

"She must have known them for six

months," replied Frank. "I told her as soon as he said it, because it was a proof what a good fellow he was, and I thought it would please her."

"You thought it would induce her to make inquiries after me," said Ellen.

"Well, perhaps so," he replied; "it's no use denying it. That *was* my motive. Hawkshawe advised it."

"This letter," said Ellen, looking over it again, "discloses many things to me, and not the least satisfactory of these disclosures is, that your affection for me is not what it used to be."

"My dearest girl! don't suppose that!" exclaimed Frank.

"I do not suppose it," said Ellen, "I *know* it; and I am glad to know it. It saves me the sorrow of inflicting pain on one whom I esteem so highly as yourself. Now, don't interrupt me, Frank, and don't remonstrate. You and I must be

friends, and we must have no concealments from each other. Our youthful love is dead, or rather it has changed its character; or perhaps it never existed at all, except in our imaginations. But we are friends—we love one another as brother and sister, and if that fatal wealth ever becomes really mine, I could never marry. Oh! Frank! Frank! can you not understand my meaning?”—and she covered her face with her hands, and wept abundantly—“that will be dated at the end of last June, before he quitted England!”

“Why then, he must have known you before he came out!” said Frank.

“Yes—and loved me,” she replied, in a voice choked with sobs.

“And you loved him!” exclaimed Frank; “of course, you could not help it.”

“I did,” replied Ellen, “but he did not suspect it. It was not till he was gone that I knew it myself. He thought I loved

you. I don't know how he found it all out, and that you were in the Crimea; but I am quite sure he knew it. He used to read the papers to me, and perhaps I showed some unusual interest when your regiment was mentioned. And he saw your portrait too, by accident."

"That explains his conduct when he was first introduced at our mess," said Frank. "He was very silent and reserved, though not at all shy or constrained; and he examined all our faces, as though he meant to paint our portraits, and at last he fixed upon me. I now understand the whole of his conduct. But, good Heavens! did any one ever hear of such disinterested affection! He seems to have delighted in sacrificing himself in every possible way to preserve me for your sake! And at last gets himself killed while doing my duty! Don't scorn me for these tears, Ellen. The oldest veteran in the army might shed

them for such a cause, and I am weak with illness and my wound."

"I love you for shedding them, Frank," she replied; "they do you honour. But I cannot believe that Reginald is dead. Did you see the body that they called his?"

"Yes, I saw him," replied Frank, mournfully.

"Tell me *exactly* what the appearance was," said Ellen. "Do not hesitate for fear of grieving me. The report said that the head was mutilated by a cannon-ball. Was it so?"

"It was indeed," he replied, shuddering, as he recalled the horrid spectacle.

"Could you distinguish the features?" she inquired.

"No," replied Frank.

"And the body was stripped?" she continued.

"Yes," said Frank; "but his height was so remarkable——"

"Others might be as tall," interrupted Ellen. "And now I will tell you why I believe him to be still alive. There is a peculiar sound heard before a death occurs in his family, and it has not been heard since he went abroad. Do not look so incredulous, Frank," she continued; "I have heard it twice myself, and on both occasions a death immediately followed. You shall see a letter which I received to-day from an old servant, assuring me that the Death Wail has not been heard. However it may be, I am resolved not to touch the property for a year."

"In that I think you are quite right," returned Frank; "and I wish your comfortable superstition may prove correct."

"I believe it will. I am sure it will!" replied Ellen. "And you, too, will believe it when I tell you the whole story; but that cannot be yet."

"Why not?" inquired Frank. "We have two good hours to dinner-time."

"I cannot remain in this house any longer, Frank," she replied.

"Surely you are not so foolish as to run away because I am here!" said he.

"Not I, indeed," replied Ellen, with a faint smile; "but I must be hypocrite enough to make that my excuse. Your mother has been sufficiently punctilious on points of etiquette to put it out of her power to object. I shall accept an invitation that I received before anything was known about this property, from a delightful old maiden lady—Miss Brownlow. You must recollect her, I think. She used to visit the Eatons."

"I know her well," said Frank; "and I know she will not object to my coming to see you at her house."

"There, then, I will go," said Ellen.

"But you have not told me your reason for leaving my mother's house, Ellen. What is it, if not that I scare the proprieties?"

Ellen did not reply by words, but she looked at Frank's letter to his mother, and turned it round in her fingers.

"Ah! I see," said he, moodily; "of course you cannot like to live with her after that. And by making me and propriety the scape-goats, you avoid any disagreeable explanations, and a possible row, and hysterics, and all that sort of thing."

"Exactly," replied Ellen; "that is my object; and, Frank, I think it may be best to avoid telling Lady Willoughby of the explanations we have had. When I was first left poor and almost friendless, she chose to treat our engagement as a childish affair that could not be recognised by grown-up, sensible people; and when, about six months ago, she sought me out, and treated me with the most assiduous attention, my pride, as well as my altered feelings, made me take the cue from her

former conduct. Mr. Smedley had dropped some hints of a fortune that was likely to come to me, and I imagined the dear old gentleman meant to make me his heiress, and that in the hope of making us happy, he had confided it to your mother. You may suppose that her friendship, based on such interested motives, was not very flattering to me. I accepted her overtures as a matter of policy and convenience to myself, because it was only through your letters to her that I could hear news of Reginald. You may be inclined to accuse me of acting with duplicity equal to her own in this; but I do not think the accusation would be just."

"No, no," said Frank; "I think you were quite right."

"Lady Willoughby," continued Ellen, "had definitively denied and annulled our engagement, as far as she could do so, and your long silence had confirmed her decision."

"But I wrote repeatedly, you know," he said, warmly.

"It was all the same, as far as I was concerned, because your mother suppressed your letters," said Ellen. "When she sought to renew her acquaintance with me she said not a word of renewing our engagement; and I think I was justified in treating it as a thing that had never existed."

"So you were," said Frank, with a sigh; "no one can blame you."

"I am glad you say so, because I am so anxious to retain your good opinion," said she.

"There is one thing, Ellen, that I cannot quite comprehend," said Frank. "How is it, that with all this weight of anxiety on your mind, you can go out to so many parties, and indulge in so much gaiety?"

"How do you know that I indulge in much gaiety?"

“My mother told me,” replied Frank; “and warned me that I must not lose time, for you already have plenty of admirers; and when it becomes known that you have a large fortune as well, you will have offers of marriage by the dozen.”

“And you listened to that prudent advice, and would have acted upon it?” said Ellen.

“Why,” continued Frank, “you know I thought you still had an affection for me, and upon my word I was not aware, till you found it out and told me of it, that my feelings towards you had undergone the slightest change. And then, again, how could I suspect that Reginald knew anything about you before I told him? Could the wildest flight of imagination have guessed the truth? And Reginald told me, too, that he left all to you that my mother’s objections might be removed. What *could* I think, you know, but that the

best way to carry out his wishes was to get married at once?"

"That is satisfactory enough," said Ellen; "and I see that your conduct was perfectly natural, though rather hasty. And now I will tell you why I have 'indulged in gaiety.' It has been simply that I might meet and converse with officers from the Crimea who could tell me anything about Reginald. The gaiety has not been of the most exhilarating character, I can assure you."

"Poor girl!" said Frank, with glistening eyes. "I can well believe it! But now you will hear enough of him from me. I shall never tire of talking about him. Not a day passed without his performing some generous action, or doing good to some one, even to one of the enemy. One day we had had some skirmishing, and he, as usual, lent his gigantic strength to help in bringing our wounded men back. The place where we had been at it was a mile beyond

our outposts, and the enemy had fallen back from it too. Well, just at dusk, Reginald came to me to borrow a lantern that I had got, so of course I asked what he wanted it for. And then he told me that among the Russians who were left dead where we had been fighting, there was an officer who was not dead, and who spoke English well. He told Reginald he had a young wife, and a little son a few weeks old, whom he had never seen. 'And now, perhaps,' he added, 'I never shall see him.' So Reginald bound up the Russian's wounded leg with his handkerchief, and whatever else he could lay his hands on, and placed him as comfortably as he could in a thicket, that our fellows might not carry him off as a prisoner, and now he wanted the lantern to find him, and help him on to his own people. I tried all I could to dissuade him, for I feared he might get shot; but he only smiled, and said, 'If

I am, Frank, I cannot die at a better time, nor in a better service. A man who is killed in battle, dies in the service of his country; but a man who is killed in the performance of an act of humanity, dies in the service of God. If I don't return, give my love to your wife—to Ellen Maynard—and may you both be happy!" Still I tried to keep him from going, but it was all of no use. I dare say you know how determined he was. I begged him to take some men with him, and bring the Russian back, for he would be well treated with us, though a prisoner; but he shook his head, and said, quite reproachfully, "That young wife, Frank!" and turned to go. Then I said I would go with him."

"Dear Frank!" sobbed Ellen, amid her tears. "I was expecting that! I thought you would say so!"

"It was all of no use," continued Frank; "he would not suffer me to go. One, he

said, could go with comparative safety, where two would be almost certain to run into destruction. Besides, he said, *I* had some one to live for, which made my life valuable; whereas *he* had nobody to care for him."

"What a mistake!" sighed Ellen.

"So the end of it all was that he would go alone," said Frank, "and alone he did go. He carried with him water, and brandy, and wine, and bread, besides the lantern and some bandages. I determined to keep watch till his return; but oh! you cannot imagine how weary a fellow feels after being on duty all the night before. I got a book and sat on the edge of my bed, and began to read: but I could not have been at it many minutes before I fell back fast asleep. The first thing that roused me was Reginald putting my legs upon the bed, for they were dangling over the side in a most uncomfortable way, and covering me

over with the blankets. I heaped all manner of abuse upon myself for being such a selfish brute as to sleep while he was in danger; but he only laughed, and assured me there had been no danger at all. He found the Russian officer just as he left him, and the bandages had kept pretty well in place. He gave him bread soaked in brandy, and then he got him on his back, and carried him to the Russian outposts. The sentries were amazed, but treated Reginald with great respect, when their officer spoke to them; and there he left him, praying Heaven to give him an opportunity of proving his gratitude. There, now—can any one else tell you such an anecdote of your Reginald? Will you not stay with me rather than go to parties?"

"I shall not go to so many, certainly," replied Ellen; "but there is one at which I shall meet a gentleman whom I very

much wish to see, and as it does not take place for a fortnight, perhaps you may be able to go too. You will be certain to have an invitation when it is known that you have returned. There is a great demand for Crimean heroes."

"It is fortunate for many of us that everybody does not judge our heroism by so high a standard as you do, Ellen," he replied, "or some who now get praise and honours, would only receive blame and contempt."

"I hope you will forgive me, Frank, for so misjudging you," said Ellen; "but it was owing to your mother having told me you were returning almost solely on account of—of—getting married, in fact."

"It's a very hard case," said Frank, "to be compelled to blush for one's mother; but I must own that I am heartily ashamed of mine. However, it's not the first time by many, so you need not feel uncomfort-

able about it. I have no doubt I shall be able to go with you to this ball. Hobbling is thought very becoming now-a-days. You have not told me why you are so anxious to see this gentleman. Who is he?"

"He is an Austrian," replied she ; "yet, I understand, of a very noble and honourable character."

"You amuse me with your distinctions, Ellen," said Frank, interrupting her; "an Austrian, *yet* an honourable man! Do you mean to imply that Austrian gentlemen are not usually honourable men?"

"Perhaps I was wrong," said Ellen. "One is so apt to judge of individuals by their national character."

"Oh, that's it!" exclaimed Frank; "now I can agree with you; and I am perfectly willing to admit that an individual Austrian *may* be an honourable man, though nationally a sneak and coward of the most

neutral-tinted dye. Well, and what about this gentleman?"

"He has been among the Russians in the Crimea," replied Ellen; "and I hope to obtain some information from him respecting the English prisoners. I have a sort of feverish hope that Reginald may be a prisoner."

Frank made no reply. He could not for a moment entertain the same hope, for had he not seen his friend's corpse consigned to the grave? But he would not needlessly dispel the flattering illusion to which she clung so desperately.

Ellen saw the feeling that caused his silence, and her eyes filled with tears. To hide the rising emotion she started up, and sought out Lady Willoughby, to announce her intention of accepting Miss Brownlow's invitation. Her ladyship had herself stood too much upon points of etiquette for her to make any objections to this arrange-

ment ; so she contented herself with patting the young lady's cheek, and calling her a dear little prude.

Ellen despatched a note to Miss Brownlow, and the same evening saw her established under that lady's protection, in a snug little house in Mayfair.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FRIAR OF ORDERS GREY.

FRANK WILLOUGHBY was a daily visitor at Mayfair, much to his mother's satisfaction, who supposed that the whole of the time he spent with Ellen was employed in making progress in his matrimonial speculation.

Miss Brownlow, being a woman of a very different stamp, was taken into the young people's confidence; and having a Banshee in her own family, was much impressed by Ellen's account of the Death Wail of the Hawkshawes, and fully agreed with her in believing that the last descendant of the

original stock would not die without the usual warning.

If Ellen had felt comforted by Oliver's expressions of faith, how much more consolation and support did she derive from the concurrence of a woman of sense and education, like Miss Brownlow !

The evening of Mrs. Livingstone's party, where Ellen hoped to meet the Austrian, at length arrived. Frank had promised his assistance, as he could ask more direct questions than she could put with propriety.

The rooms were crowded, but the Austrian had not arrived. Frank strove to enliven his companion's drooping spirits, and Miss Brownlow whispered words of comfort in her other ear.

"I trust I shall not be so foolish as to faint," said Ellen; "let me sit in this quiet corner for a few moments, and then, my dear friend, I will ask you to take me home."

"I will fetch you a glass of wine," said

Frank, and away he limped, looking very interesting in his uniform, with his pale face and slender figure.

"There are some fresh arrivals," said Miss Brownlow, "but I heard no Austrian name. However, if you think you can be left with safety, I will just go and see who they are."

"Pray do," said Ellen, eagerly; "I can be left quite safely, and I will not stir till you return."

Ellen sat in the dreary solitude of the crowd. Immediately after Miss Brownlow's departure she became aware that the fresh arrivals were a party from a *bal costumé*, who were expected to show themselves, and pass an hour or two. The music struck up again; dancing was renewed with redoubled animation; and the whole scene swam before her like a troubled dream, over which chronology brooded like a nightmare.

Charles the Second whirled past, whispering characteristic gallantries to a young damsel in the costume of the nineteenth century. Henry the Eighth was polking with Miss Brown; while Mary Queen of Scots, some three hundred years after her execution, skipped lightly, and flirted while she skipped, with Captain Dashwood of the Hussars. Then there were plenty of Turks talking perfectly vernacular English; and one or two young Turkish ladies, who suffered their unveiled faces to be gazed on by crowds of infidels, fearless of the bow-string, the sack, and the Bosphorus.

Ellen's eyes were fixed anxiously on the spot where Frank had disappeared. A weight which she could scarcely endure oppressed her spirits, and she watched for his return, to conduct her to Miss Brownlow's carriage. She could sit there, she thought, in the cool air of the street, and if she did faint, there would be no one to see her.

A deep sigh fell on her ear. She turned, and saw standing beside her a tall figure, which she immediately recognised as one of the maskers, habited as a "Friar of Orders Grey." His cowl was drawn over the upper part of his face, and from beneath it hung a long white beard.

As he drew nearer to her, she observed that his movements were slow and faltering, and that he leaned heavily on his staff for support.

"Have I been rightly informed, young lady," he said, in a deep sepulchral tone, "that you are Miss Maynard?"

"That is my name," she replied, hardly able to repress the agitation that she felt.

"*Ellen Maynard?*" repeated the stranger, interrogatively.

"Yes—yes!" she responded, hurriedly.

"Then I have a message to deliver to you, from one who fell in the East," said the stranger. "May I be permitted to sit beside you?"

Ellen tried to gasp out her consent, but could only indicate it with her hand.

"I must apologise for not raising my hood," said the stranger, sitting near enough to be heard without difficulty, but not so near as to appear obtrusive. "I too have been a soldier, and have a wound on my face, which renders me for the present unpresentable to ladies' eyes."

"Make no excuses, sir," said Ellen, "but tell me, I entreat of you, what was the message?"

"Do you not ask who sent it?" inquired the stranger.

"I know—I know too well!" replied Ellen. "It could be but *one*."

"The name of him who gave me this message was Reginald Hawkshawe," said the stranger.

"*Was!*" repeated Ellen, clasping her hands in agony, "oh, do not say *was!* It

is his name, for I am sure he is not—cannot—*must* not be dead!"

"I was present when he fell," said the friar. "His last words were a prayer for your happiness, and the message which he desired me to deliver to you, if ever I had the opportunity, was to ask you to pray for him sometimes at the grave on the sea-beach; to think of him with as much kindness as you can; and to take care of his horse and dog, the only living creatures that love him. Also," and here the friar's voice had a hard and constrained tone in it—"he desires that you will speedily marry the man you love; and may you be happy with him!"

The stranger rose and turned to go, but Ellen's broken words detained him.

"The man I love is dead!" she exclaimed, starting to her feet. "Frank Willoughby is as a brother to me. I love Reginald Hawkshawe! But he is dead, you say,

and I will have no other husband. Oh, Reginald! Reginald! Reginald!"

The words seemed wrenched with agony from her bosom. She spread out her arms as if seeking support, and fell forward on the floor.

Frank and Miss Brownlow were close at hand, and they raised her before her fall had attracted much notice. Neither of them had particularly remarked the friar, who mixed with the crowd on their appearance. A side door was near, and through this Frank managed to convey the senseless girl, notwithstanding his lameness. The cool air revived her, and she crawled down to the carriage, without making any commotion among the visitors.

Miss Brownlow herself superintended the operation of putting her to bed, and left her apparently asleep. But Ellen's grief required to withdraw itself from every eye, even the kindest and most sympathetic, and

the night was passed in tears and wakefulness.

Miss Brownlow's maid entered her mistress's room rather earlier than usual, and in answer to the lady's inquiry after Miss Maynard's health, presented to her a note, saying she supposed Miss Maynard was better, as she was able to take a journey.

"A journey!" said Miss Brownlow. "What do you mean? Where is she gone?"

"I don't know, ma'am," replied the servant; "only she set off about eight o'clock this morning, and told Susan to let you have this note as soon as you were awake."

"Draw back the curtains, Goodwin," said Miss Brownlow. "I want to know what is amiss."

The note was as follows:—

"You know all the feelings of my heart,

my dear friend,—all my hopes, and all my sorrows; and therefore I need not apologise for my abrupt departure, further than by explaining the cause of it. Last night I spoke with one who saw *him* fall, and received his last words, and a message to me. I have no doubt now—no hope. I shall depart in half an hour for St. Osyth's, for I cannot endure even a look of sympathy at present. Among the scenes that are endeared to me by —— [The page was here rendered illegible by the tears that had fallen upon it.] I cannot write more now. In a few days you shall hear from me again.

Yours affectionately,

“ELLEN MAYNARD.”

By the time this note was read there were fresh tears upon it, and then the warm-hearted old lady (she was an Irish-woman) lay down and sobbed for an hour. Perhaps some early recollections were

aroused by Ellen's sorrows; perhaps it was only the warm impulsive Hibernian blood, and glowing imagination that so readily made another's woes her own.

Goodwin was just ascending the stairs with a cup of tea for her mistress, when a thundering double knock at the street door caused her to stop and listen. There was something remarkable in the knock. It was not the performance of a footman; it was some impetuous gentleman, in a violent hurry.

Such a knock was sure to be answered promptly, and in a moment she heard Frank Willoughby's voice, asking for Miss Maynard. A dialogue ensued between the impatient young soldier and the porter, in which the humble tones of the latter being lost in a confused murmur, only the speeches of the former were distinguishable; but from them Goodwin could gather the sense of the whole.

"Gone!—gone where?"—A murmur.

"What the deuce! Eight o'clock this morning! And left no message?"—Murmur.

"Is Miss Brownlow up yet?"—Murmur.

"Never mind! I *must* see her! It's an affair of life and death, and a great deal more besides. Where's her maid?"

Another murmur, followed by a bounding and hopping up the stairs, accompanied by muttered imprecations upon his lame leg, and Frank stood beside the lady's maid, outside Miss Brownlow's chamber door.

"So your mistress is not up yet, Goodwin?" he asked.

"No, sir," replied the servant.

"Tell her I want to speak to her on a most important subject," said Frank. "I'll keep my eyes shut, or be blindfolded, if she will only admit me for just two minutes."

"Goodwin! who is there?" called the lady from within.

"It's Captain Willoughby, ma'am, wanting particularly to speak to you."

"Has anything dreadful happened?" cried Miss Brownlow, quite forgetting, in her anxiety about Ellen, to consider whether her nightcap was becomingly arranged. "Oh, Frank, make haste and tell me what it is! Has she done anything rash?"

"It seems rather rash to bolt so suddenly," said Frank, advancing into the room; "but what I want to know is where she is gone?"

"Read that note," said Miss Brownlow. "That's all I know about it."

Frank read it, sitting on the edge of the old lady's bed. Then he whispered a few words to her, that Goodwin might not hear what he said. A short colloquy followed in

the same cautious tones, and Frank took his leave, descending the staircase with wonderful rapidity by a means which I am sorry to have to record of an officer in Her Majesty's army—namely, sliding down the balusters.

The moment Frank was gone Miss Brownlow jumped up, and dressed in a great hurry. During the whole of the day she bustled and fidgeted about, and seemed to be expecting somebody to come, or something to happen; yet no one unusual called upon her, and nothing particular occurred. She went to bed with great deliberation, as though she might receive a summons at any stage of the proceedings; and the following morning she got up early in a hurry, and was in a hurry till the afternoon, when she received a telegraphic message, at which she laughed immoderately, at intervals, for the rest of the day. And yet there

seemed nothing very witty or humorous in the message, for it contained only these words—"Frank Willoughby to Miss Brownlow. All's serene."

CHAPTER XV.

THE MOURNERS MEET IN THE GARDEN AT
ST. OSYTH'S.

At an early hour on the same day that Miss Brownlow received the telegraphic message from Frank Willoughby, the unhappy mistress of St. Osyth's Priory wandered through the garden, now her own property.

She had arrived late on the previous night, and had lain awake till the dawn. The few servants who remained, had welcomed her with tears. Hector alone seemed joyful, and even he, after his first salutation, looked wistfully in her face, and whined, and asked as plainly as dog could ask, where was his master?

As Ellen wandered about the well-known garden paths, the faithful animal followed her with drooping head, sympathising with her grief.

"Hector," she said, in a plaintive voice, "where is your master?"

The dog seemed to understand her, and whined piteously.

"I have not seen Ganymede yet, Hector," she continued, as though the creature could comprehend her words. "He shall come out here with us. He misses his master too."

She went into the library and rang the bell. Oliver obeyed the summons.

"Tell the groom to bring Mr. Reginald's horse, Ganymede, round into the garden," said Ellen.

"Yes, Miss," replied the old man, astonished at the unusual order, but too respectful to express anything beyond implicit obedience. "If you please, Miss, here

is a small parcel that Master Reginald left with me for you. It's your keys, I think."

"Thank you, Oliver," she said, taking the packet with a trembling hand.

"If you please, Miss," he continued, with great diffidence and hesitation, "will you forgive me for making so bold, but do you really think there is no hope? We have not heard any sounds yet."

"I have spoken to a gentleman who was with him when he fell," she replied, bursting into tears. "No, Oliver! there is no hope—none! Except the hope that I may soon follow him, and end a life that is too miserable to be borne!"

"Don't take on so, Miss!" cried the old man, while the tears flowed down his withered cheeks; "dear Miss! pray don't! Seek for comfort from One above. You have often found comfort there before; and you know that those who seek faithfully never seek in vain."

"Presently I shall be able to do so," said the young lady, "but now I could only pray for death. He sent me a message, Oliver, asking me to be kind to his horse and dog. So send Ganymede round to the garden. Those poor dumb creatures are the only companions I can endure now."

She returned to the garden, and if she had been able to take any heed of time, she would have found that her orders were not obeyed very promptly. But she sat on the grass beside the stream, watching the sparkling eddies with a vacant eye, in that stagnant condition of mind, which only those who have suffered deep and hopeless sorrow can fully comprehend, and which makes them feel, when aroused from it, how blessed a thing insanity or death must be.

The delay was caused by Oliver's having heard a ring at the outer gate, as he passed by to take the message to the stables, and his stopping to answer it.

A post-chaise was outside, and a young, military-looking man, with bright blue eyes and chestnut hair, stood at the wicket.

"Is Miss Maynard here?" he demanded, impatiently.

"Yes, sir," replied the old servant.

"Is she well?" was the next inquiry.

A head, much muffled in a travelling cloak and cap, was bent forward in the chaise, as if to catch the replies.

"She's not exactly ill, sir," said Oliver, "but I can't say she is well. I am sure she can't see any visitors, sir."

"We'll see about that," was the half-laughing reply. "Your name is Oliver, is it not?"

"Yes, sir," said Oliver, just preparing to draw back and shut the wicket, for he began to suspect an invasion from the heir-at-law.

"Just come to the chaise-door, then, will you, to speak to this gentleman," said the

military-looking man who had hitherto addressed him.

"Thank you, sir," replied the cautious old servant, "but perhaps the gentleman will have the kindness to state his business before I leave my mistress's gate unguarded."

The head in the chaise bent forward again, the cap was off, and the collar of the cloak pulled down.

"Oliver!" said the voice belonging to the head; and the old man sprang forward with the activity of youth, and clung trembling to the chaise door.

"Oh, come! I say—I say," cried the young military man, supporting Oliver by the arm lest he should fall. "Keep up, man! Why, this is too much for him!"

The postillions were twisting themselves round in their saddles, trying to see what was going on; but all they could make out was that the military gentleman opened the

chaise door, and pushed Oliver in, but stood outside himself while the three held a conference in subdued, but cheerful tones. Oliver then jumped out, with a "Yes, sir! yes, sir! It shall be done directly!" and ran back into the courtyard, leaving the wicket open behind him.

The postillions were then paid and dismissed, somewhat dissatisfied at not having been able to unravel the mystery.

The garden was too remote from the entrance-hall for Ellen to hear the sound of the wheels, and if it had reached her, it would have fallen upon unheeding ears, as she sat, mechanically caressing Hector's soft ears with one hand, and with the other plucking blades of grass and setting them to float on the stream. For the time she was in a state of harmless and unrepulsive idiocy.

At the sound of a horse's hoofs on the gravelled path she started as from a sleep, and stared round her.

"Shall I bring him on to the grass, Miss?" asked the groom who was leading Ganymede. "I'm afeard he'll cut up the turf sadly."

"I do not care for the turf. Bring him here," she replied, and took the bridle from him. "Thank you, John. That will do. You can go now. I will send for you when I want you to take him back."

The groom looked dubious; scratched his head, shook it slowly, and then retreated; for there was a dignity in Ellen's grief that commanded implicit obedience.

She stood with the bridle in her hand, watching the man's departure, before she ventured to give utterance to her emotions. When the clang of the gate told her it was closed, she threw her arms round the neck of the noble animal, and talked to him in broken accents of his lost master. The horse looked at her with his large, full eyes, and whinnied softly,

and seemed as much depressed as Hector had been.

Yes,—as Hector *had* been ; for what ailed the dog now? With one paw resting against Ganymede's flank, he stood on his hinder legs, and sniffed at the horse's shoulder, uttering a succession of eager whines, broken by an occasional sharp bark, as though he were on the scent of some quarry.

When in the chaise, Oliver had kissed and pressed *a hand*. He had afterwards patted Ganymede's shoulder in the stable. Did the keen scent inherited from his blood-hound ancestors enable Hector to detect the faint trace thus conveyed?

"You think your dear master is coming now to mount Ganymede," said poor Ellen, addressing the dog; "but he will never come again, Hector! never—never—never come again!"

Her four-footed friends seemed to have

lost all sympathy for her ; for Ganymede, now looking over her shoulder towards the library windows, in which he perhaps saw his own image reflected, arched his neck, pricked his small ears, and neighed long and joyously.

“He will not come for thy calling, poor Ganymede,” said Ellen, caressing his neck. But now the dog began again, and his demonstrations were so singular that they attracted her attention. He was crouching on the ground, trembling till every hair seemed to quiver distinctly, and dragging himself towards some object behind her, uttering all the while the most piteous sounds. The horse neighed again, and stretched his yearning neck over her shoulder.

Ellen turned, and there, close behind her, stood the figure she had seen at the ball,—the “Friar of Orders Grey.”

The cowl was still drawn over his face.

He no longer, however, leaned feebly on his staff, but stood, with folded arms, drawn up to his full majestic height. Another change she also noticed—the white beard was gone, and in its place a thick black one was plainly visible.

It was now Ellen's turn to tremble. She stood fixed, gazing at the figure. Still it moved not. She rubbed her eyes; but it did not vanish. And the dog was now at his feet, licking them; but he did not notice him. The horse, released from her gentle hold, approached him, and whinnied a soft recognition; but he did not move. At length the arms unfolded themselves. He took one step forward and extended them. Ellen shrieked out the name of Reginald, and sprang into the friar's embrace.

“My darling! my own darling!” murmured a deep well-known voice, as the cowl bent down and covered her face also. Then from beneath it proceeded a most un-

friar-like sound; for the friar was certainly kissing her, and she as certainly made no resistance, though I should be sorry to say she kissed him in return. "My dearest one! my own Ellen!" he murmured again.

"How could you be so cruel as to tell me you were dead?" she whispered.

"I could not suppose it would grieve you, dearest," he replied. "I had heard that you still went into company after the report of my death had reached you, so I could not think you mourned for my loss."

"It was because I hoped you were still living, and I wanted to hear news of you," said Ellen.

"Yes, Frank Willoughby has told me all about that," said Reginald. "The only person who knew I was alive was one of the party of masqueraders who went that night to Mrs. Livingstone's. He ascertained that you were to be there, and introduced me in this disguise; for I longed to see you

again, and perhaps to hear you speak before I set off for the backwoods of America, where I meant to hide myself. The first person I recognised was Frank; and you were leaning on his arm. It was only what I expected, but my heart was torn with grief and jealousy. I felt that I could not endure it any longer, and was just going away, to start by the night train for Liverpool, when I turned for one last look, and saw that he had left you. An irresistible feeling led me back. There was an elderly lady with you, but she too went away. You know the rest. Your first eager words startled me; but it was not till the last, when you fell on the floor, that I could believe that you really loved me. But that crowded ball-room was no place for explanations. Already there were curious eyes upon us, and as I saw Frank and your old lady-friend at hand to assist you, I made my escape. I waited in the

street, expecting to see you come out; but all in vain. I did not of course know where to find you, so about the time when you were flying down here by the railway, I was rousing up Frank Willoughby, whom I easily found, and asking him for an explanation. What he told me made all clear; and he sprang up as if the drums were beating to arms, and went off to break the intelligence to you. He found your old friend crying her eyes out over your note; but left her in a very different mood. We came down together, and here we are!" he exclaimed. At which, period a repetition of the uncanonical sounds occurred.

"Oh! Reginald!" said Ellen, "is it really Reginald? I can't believe it is true! Yet this is my Reginald's black beard, and the horse and dog know you. But why do you keep this hood over your face? Are you really wounded?"

"Not very severely," he replied, throwing

back the cowl, and showing a strip of black plaster on his temple. "It is rather ornamental than otherwise. Don't you think so?"

"How did you get it?" she inquired. "And how did you get back? I want to know everything."

"How impatient we have become all at once!" said Reginald; "I got it in the skirmish wherein I was supposed to be killed. I lay senseless for some time, but was discovered by a Russian officer to whom I had rendered a service some months before."

"I know—I know!" cried Ellen, eagerly, "that officer with a young wife, whom you carried to his own men, and——"

"Ay, ay, that very one, fortunately," interrupted Reginald; "I see Frank has told you all my exploits. With the help of a soldier whom he could trust, he took off my uniform, and dressed me in the clothes of a huge Russian, whose body I understood

was afterwards buried for mine. I was then taken off to the hospital, and through his interest, treated with great care. He came frequently to see me, but we could not talk much, as my cue was to appear half insensible that I might not be obliged to speak, and so betray that I was an Englishman. As soon as I could be removed, he had me taken to his own house in Sebastopol, and after a few weeks he intrusted me to an Austrian gentleman, whom I accompanied through Russia as a fellow-countryman, my friend having obtained a passport for me under an Austrian name. Then I found the advantage of the German you had taught me, for it suddenly became my native tongue, and I could speak nothing else."

"And this Austrian must have been the very gentleman I went to that ball purposely to see!" said Ellen.

"The very same," replied Reginald;
"Frank and I have had it all over, for you

may imagine we could not sleep on our way from town."

"And you are really Reginald?" she said, looking into his face with an expression of blended joy and doubt, "I can hardly believe it! I think it must be a dream!"

"What's your opinion, Hector? What do you say to it, Ganymede? Am I myself, or merely a dream of Miss Ellen's?" he asked, addressing his two fourfooted favourites.

The creatures, who had evidently felt themselves unduly neglected, testified unbounded joy at his words, and the caresses that accompanied them. Hector jumped and barked, and Ganymede, after laying his head on his master's shoulder and shouting a most inspiring neigh into his ear, took advantage of his freedom to kick up his heels and scamper off round the garden, followed by his canine friend, who doubtless

thought it was his duty to take care of him.

Had there been any eyes at liberty to look into the library while this scene was passing in the garden, they might have beheld a performance much resembling that of Ganymede;—namely, *a* pair of legs kicking up in the air in a most wonderful manner. The owner of them was Frank Willoughby.

When Reginald first went into the garden Frank stood breathlessly watching his proceedings.

When Ellen sprang into his arms, Frank repressed the shout of delight that struggled for utterance, and falling back on the sofa, demonstrated his satisfaction in the gymnastic fashion above-mentioned. Then came a fear lest the sudden joy had been too much for her, and he looked out. All went right, and he fell down and kicked again, and went on alternately looking and kicking, till roused

by a double peal of laughter, when he found Reginald and Ellen standing in the room.

“Oh, but I say, isn't this jolly!” he exclaimed, wringing both their hands. “By-the-bye, I must send a telegraphic message to that jolly old brick, Miss Brownlow. I promised I would.”

And forthwith he penned that extremely concise message which we have already seen, and dispatched it by the groom.

“There is one point that we have quite overlooked, Willoughby,” said Reginald, when the young man came back into the library. “I stand at present somewhat in the position of a deserter. I must return to London without loss of time, and report myself.”

“Of course you must,” said Frank, looking serious for a moment. “But you may rest this one night, I think, without any blame, especially as you are far from right yet, you know.”

"Have you any other wound besides that on your forehead?" asked Ellen, anxiously.

"Yes, love, a sabre wound on my side, which still sometimes——" and he looked inside his coat; then, with a significant glance at Frank, he added, "Humph!"

"At it again?" inquired Frank. Reginald nodded.

"Oh! what is it?" cried Ellen. "What is amiss? Does it bleed?"

"Sometimes," replied Reginald; "but nothing to be alarmed about. Go out of the room, dear, and Frank can manage to bind it up."

"If you cannot do it, call me, for I can," whispered Ellen to Frank, as she hurried out.

In a few minutes she heard her name shouted aloud by Frank, and running in, found Reginald with his coat off, lying on the sofa, almost insensible; his right side

was partially uncovered, disclosing a ghastly wound from which the blood was streaming.

"I cannot stop it," cried Frank, who was quite unnerved and trembling; "and he will bleed to death!"

Ellen had never seen such a spectacle; but with that truly womanly courage and presence of mind which seem only to exist in such emergencies, she commenced her operations.

"Ring for a sponge and water, and some brandy," she said, holding the sides of the wound together; "and put his arm down by his side—for its present attitude draws the wound open."

Poor Frank had raised the arm, not thinking of the effect it would have. He placed it as she directed, and ran off to fetch what she wanted. At the door he met Oliver, who was just coming in with a card.

"Fetch some brandy, and a sponge and

basin of water," exclaimed Frank, mechanically glancing at the card. "Hurrah! we're all right," he added. "Ellen! here's Smedley come, in the nick of time!"

Out he rushed, and returned immediately, dragging in the doctor.

Reginald tried to raise his eyes, and smiling faintly, held out his hand to Ellen's old friend.

"Keep quiet, will you!" said the doctor, snappishly. "That's right, my dear. Hold it just so. Sponge and water!—That's right," he said, to Oliver, who had just brought them in. "Now some brandy!"

"Sit down, Oliver," said Frank, putting the old servant into a chair, for he was quite overcome by the sight of his master bleeding to death, as he thought—"I'll fetch the brandy."

"Here's the key, sir," he replied. "One of the maids will show you where it is kept."

Frank hopped away with great activity, and Oliver tried to rise.

"Sit still—sit still, old friend," said Ellen, turning her pale face towards him, with one of her sweet smiles.

Reginald put his hand caressingly on her head.

"Can't you keep quiet?" exclaimed Mr. Smedley, sharply, as he put the hand back again. "You must not stir."

The doctor snapped at everybody except Ellen, until the wound was bound up, and the patient made comfortable.

"Now," said he, "my dear girl, go and wash your hands."

"Presently," she replied; "but I want to see how he gets on, first."

"Wash it off, Ellen!" whispered Reginald, in a very faint voice, but with a mischievous smile, "it is so *dirty*!"

"I do not think so," said Ellen, blushing.

"Come nearer—I want to whisper to

you," said he; and she leaned over him—"the handkerchief is still over my heart. Is it *dirty* to wear it there?"

"No," she murmured, softly.

"Are your crimsoned hands disgusting to you?" he asked. "Do you turn sick at the sight of them?"

"I was sick at the thought that you might die," replied Ellen; "but the blood itself is dear to me. *Your* blood cannot be disgusting."

"Ah! then you have learned your lesson. Ellen! *now* you love! Do you remember what I said when I was a wild, untutored savage? Savage as I was, though, love had made me wiser than you on one point."

"I cannot allow so much talking," said Mr. Smedley, interrupting the whispered conversation of the lovers. "Miss Ellen! Obey orders, and wash your hands. In a few days he will be able to talk enough to satisfy even feminine curiosity."

"Will you stay with him, sir?" asked Ellen.

"Certainly I will, as long as it is necessary," replied Mr. Smedley; "and with such a doctor and such a nurse he cannot fail to get well."

"But I," said Ellen, dubiously, "I must not stay, I fear."

"Do you want to kill me?" cried Reginald, with one of his old fierce looks, as he raised himself on the sofa.

"Hush!—hush!—keep quiet!" said the doctor, trying to put him down again, but the sudden excitement had given Reginald so much strength, that he found it impossible to do so. "Don't agitate yourself. She shall not go."

"It is not her going or staying that I care for," he said, trembling with emotion; "it is her cruelty in wishing to go."

"I do not wish to go, dearest Reginald!" cried Ellen, in tears, "I only thought I ought not to stay."

"If you think you ought to go, pray do so," said Reginald, falling back on the pillows.

"I will not go, indeed I will not!" exclaimed Ellen, terrified at his paleness, and the doctor's uneasy glance.

"Will you be married by special licence in a day or two?" asked Reginald, in a weak voice.

"Yes—yes—anything you wish," she replied.

He pressed her hand, but turned so pale that Mr. Smedley administered a little more brandy.

"Don't look so frightened, you little fool!" said Reginald, as the faintness passed away. "I am not going to die yet, for I have something to live for. But I am sure the doctor will tell you that you must not vex me, nor contradict me in anything."

"Indeed you must not," responded Mr.

Smedley; "you have had sufficient proof of that, I think."

"You need not caution me to be careful," said Ellen, "I will not oppose him in anything again."

"You are a witness to her promise, doctor," said Reginald, smiling.

Ellen thought of the promise she had given in her terror, to be married in a few days, and went off hastily to wash her hands.

CHAPTER XVI.

LAST SCENE OF ALL.

WHEN Ellen stood in the solitude of her chamber she could not but reflect on the change that had come over her whole existence since she had crept out of it in the morning, a broken-hearted, despairing creature, without a hope on this side the grave. Then her memory went back to the time when she had fled from it, on the fatal night of the fire. Again she beheld the old hag bending over her demoniacal work;—the wild music rang in her ears, and the face that imagination had pictured, gleamed pale and spirit-like through the

window;—again she descended the slippery path, and was poised upon the sea in her frail bark—

To cry to the waves that roar'd to her,
To sigh to the winds, whose pity, sighing back again,
Did her but loving wrong.

And again the red glare of the fire lighted up rock and wave.

Then came intervals of unconsciousness; a sense of hunger, and a burning thirst; some fleeting thoughts of Reginald, but the abiding feeling still was that of trust in heaven, and prayer for aid to bear meekly the trials that were allotted to her. Then followed the sudden plunge into the water, and, heard amid all the din, the loud barking of a dog. All after was dark as the tomb, till she found herself at Mrs. Franklyn's.

The subsequent events passed in equally rapid review before her; every incident as distinct as when it happened. Probably

her memory was strengthened by this exercise, for she suddenly recollected, with perfect clearness, the whole of the gipsy's dying prophecy.

“‘They stand at the altar!’” she repeated. “It is to be so, then! How little could I at that time imagine that those she spoke of were Reginald and myself! And, above all, that I should rejoice at it! And he has my promise to marry him in a few days! And Mr. Smedley says I must not thwart him! How foolish I was to promise so hastily! And yet—why should I regret it? It will give me a right to nurse him, —and what has he not done and suffered for my sake! No—I must not thwart him!”

She fell into a reverie, from which she at length started with the exclamation, “Oh, how happy I am!” The still small voice of conscience demanded if she was also grateful. She had called unceasingly upon her Saviour in the time of tribulation,

but had she recollected him in the hour of joy?

With an humbled heart she knelt and breathed her grateful thanks to Him who had watched over her through all her trials and dangers; and when she arose, the hurricane of joy had passed, and a calm and holy sense of happiness remained.

"Doctor," said Reginald, soon after Ellen had left the library, "when a dose of medicine has to be swallowed, don't you advise your patients to swallow it quickly, without stopping to think about it?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Smedley; "but I have not prescribed any for you."

"I know that," said Reginald; "but I want you to impress the principle upon Ellen. She will, sooner or later, be obliged to swallow the bitter pill of swearing to obey; and I am of opinion that the sooner she gets it over, the better. Besides, she has scruples about propriety, and I don't

like to make her act against her opinion of what is right, nor can I think of letting her out of my sight again. All would be made straight by a quiet marriage. She gave her consent to it just now, in her fright, and I shall keep her to her word. Your advice will go a great way with her."

"It's rather sudden," said the old gentleman; "but, considering all the circumstances, I think it would be advisable."

"That's right," said Reginald. "Now make her think so too."

"If Ellen has given her word," said Frank, "she will not draw back from it. I never knew her break a promise since she was old enough to give one."

"Ah, Frank!" said Reginald, with a sigh, "how many pleasant recollections you must have, as the companion of Ellen's childhood! I never envied anyone before."

"And you'd better not begin now, old fellow," replied Frank, laughing; "for with

all these pleasant recollections you might be obliged to take the extra-pleasant consciousness that your early intimacy had ensured for you her most *sisterly* affection."

"Keep your own associations, Frank, and keep the sisterly affection you have got," said Reginald; "my envious fit is over."

"I don't know whether mine is, though," said Frank to himself, pulling a long face as he looked out into the garden. "By-the-bye, Mr. Smedley," he continued, turning round, after a few minute's contemplation, with his usual beaming expression of countenance, "we have not yet heard to what happy circumstance we owe your very opportune arrival here. You must think we live in a land of miracles, and that such an event as an angel suddenly popping down upon us, and sending in his card, is not a matter to cause us any astonishment."

"Your visit is so opportune," observed

Reginald, "that it seems ungrateful to ask why you came. Yet I must own to a share in Frank's curiosity."

"I had to go to town on business," said the doctor, "and heard from Captain Willoughby's lady mother that Miss Maynard had suddenly eloped by herself to St. Osyth's, and that the next train had taken down her dearly beloved son, and his friend Captain Hawkshawe, whom everybody had supposed to be dead. From various trifling details I gathered that the young lady, previous to her departure, was not aware of Captain Hawkshawe's return, and therefore, as I feared the too sudden joy might throw her into a brain fever, I followed. So there is the explanation of the whole mystery."

Ellen soon after re-entered, and they spent a happy evening together.

The next morning Mr. Smedley, in accordance with his promise to Reginald,

sounded Ellen respecting the advisability of a speedy marriage.

"I see he has asked you to persuade me," she said; "but that is needless. I have already given him my word."

Reginald was enchanted, but consented to extend his few days to a fortnight, by which time he was able to go to the parish church, which Ellen very much preferred to a marriage by special licence in the library, which, she said, would not be like being married at all.

The wedding was so quiet, that not even the villagers were aware of it till it was over, and then the bells rang merrily all the rest of the day, and old and young feasted on a banquet that had been privately prepared by Reginald's order at the Priory, under the superintendence of Mrs. Sweetman, who had returned to her former, and more congenial duties.

Mrs. Hawkshawe was considerably im-

proved in health and intellect. She recollected but little of the sorrows that had preceded her insanity; but as the Priory seemed to arouse painful feelings, Reginald made an arrangement, advantageous to both parties, for her to reside with Mr. and Mrs. Franklyn, with whom she lives, as happy and harmless as a child. Reginald and his gentle wife visit them frequently.

Oliver has finally quitted service, and now holds the office of parish clerk, for which he is well fitted.

Lady Willoughby went into violent hysterics on hearing of Ellen's marriage with Reginald, but as Mr. Smedley was not at hand she was compelled to "come to" by herself.

During a subsequent interview with her ladyship, the doctor hinted at some meditated disposition of his own property, which might affect Frank's future prospects, and was only warned by a little premature

tenderness on the part of the deceased knight's relict, that she had interpreted his inuendoes into the preliminaries of a proposal of marriage to herself!

More alarmed than he had ever been at the most desperate case which had come into his hands during the course of a long professional career, the poor doctor all but lost his presence of mind. However, he managed to undeceive her, without letting her see that he was aware of the error into which she had fallen, his intention being simply to make Frank his heir.

Her ladyship immediately became less sentimental, but far more rational than he had ever supposed her capable of being.

Frank is steadier than he used to be, and keeps his promise to Reginald and Mr. Smedley never to touch cards or dice, nor bet upon a horse.

And now I ought, in old-fashioned style, to say that Reginald and Ellen lived

happily all the rest of their lives; but it will be more in accordance with actual experience to say, that there seems every probability of their continuing through life, as happy as they are at the period at which my story closes.

THE END.

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